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MAY/JUNE 2000
ISSUE #80

"Perhaps magic was once a mighty force in the world, but no longer. What little remains ... is no more than the wisp of smoke that lingers in the air after a great fire has burned out, and even that is fading."

— George R. R. Martin, *A Clash of Kings*

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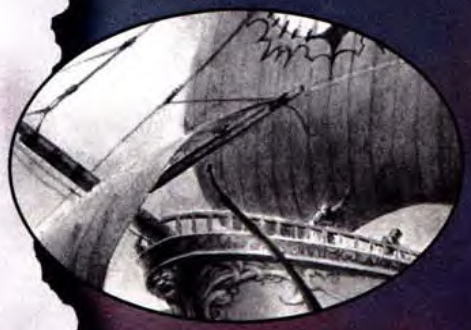


The search for gold begins with a battle on the high seas!

FORTUNE FAVORS THE DEAD

BY LANCE HAWVERMALE

The adventurers' cup

Artwork by Bob Klasnich
Cartography by Delfino and Craig Zipse

Lance writes: "I'd like to dedicate this adventure to mi hermano. *Little brother, you will always be my First Knight." This is Lance's third appearance in* DUNGEON® Adventures.

"Fortune Favors the Dead" is an AD&D® adventure set in the swashbuckling kingdom of Guadalante, land of romance and derring-do, home of swordsmen, poets, and rogues. Loosely based on early medieval Spain, Guadalante provides a setting for adventure at once familiar and alien to the players; while most players are well acquainted with such an environment through film and novels, the Spanish-style atmosphere of Guadalante is sure to seem both exotic and intriguing. But despite its distinctive setting, the adventure can be inserted easily into any campaign. At the DM's option, the kingdom of Guadalante can become any country in any fantasy world simply by changing the names of people and places.

Best suited for a band of free-wheeling characters of levels 5–7 (about 25 total levels), "Fortune Favors the Dead" is a spirited treasure hunt, following the player characters as they seek to reconstruct an antique parchment and uncover a trove of riches that lies buried somewhere in the desert sand.

Adventure Background

Gold!

Nothing excites the senses quite like the promise of gold, and that's what Francisco Vega found at the foot of the Asva Mountains—a vein of gold so yellow that it almost hurt the eyes to look upon. One hundred years ago, Francisco loaded up a team of weary burros with enough raw gold to bend their backs. Then the old prospector set out for the distant town of Puerto Mia, a coastal trade city and provincial seat of the barony. Even back then the barony of Escudor had little to recommend it other than miles of dust and the occasional bawdy cantina, so Francisco was forced to haul his fortune across fifty miles of baked earth and rattlesnakes called the Serobi Wastes. And as gold tends to do, Francisco's wealth attracted unwanted attention. When the banditos finally rode away, they left Francisco bleeding into the sand, clasping a single nugget in his fist.

The leader of the desperados, a charming cutthroat known only as Salamanca, had just made a name for himself by stealing a holy artifact—the fabled Cup of Santiago—and by single-handedly fighting his way through two dozen armed militiamen. What happened next is open to all manner of wild speculation. Some argue that Salamanca's men turned on him and murdered him in his sleep, while others say he was killed in a duel concerning another man's wife. Regardless, two days

after ambushing poor Francisco Vega and spiriting away his gold, Salamanca lay dead in the brush behind a stable in the village of Valencia.

Salamanca's greed, however, was matched only by his cunning. Upon arriving in the impoverished village of Valencia, Salamanca slipped away from his sleeping compadres and sequestered the gold in a hidden location. He drew a map that would enable him to retrace his steps in the featureless desert, then—paranoid to the point of obsession—he tore the map into four sections and scattered the pieces. Shortly after his death, his men realized the vast breadth of Salamanca's guile. They never found the gold.

Probable Plotline

The adventure will most likely proceed as follows:

1. Already possessing the first section of Salamanca's map, the PCs take control of a second piece after a rousing battle with pirates on the high seas.

2. Following the clues on the map fragments, the PCs arrive at the village of Valencia, where they lead the townspeople in an uprising against the bandit army that oppresses them. In doing so, they acquire knowledge of the third piece of the map.

3. To locate the third fragment, the PCs penetrate a prison compound and solve a riddle they find there.

4. By stealth, force, or deception, the PCs enter the home of the adventure's principal villain and wrest the last section of the map from him.

5. Finally, the PCs join the fragmented map and follow it into the Wastes to do battle with the gold's guardian and claim the treasure as their own.

Beginning the Adventure

Somehow the PCs have acquired a piece of Salamanca's map. This works best if the DM plants the map section in an earlier adventure; perhaps it's discovered in a treasure hoard or between the pages of a dusty spellbook. Regardless, the place where the PCs come upon the fragment should be a considerable distance from the white shores of Guadalante. Indeed, an entire ocean should separate the characters from the heart of Salamanca's story. In the GREYHAWK® campaign, Guadalante could lie south of Hepmonaland. Whatever its location, research indicates that Guadalante is an insular nation, known for its cosmopolitan cities and untamed frontiers. After consulting the appropriate sage or employing the proper divinatory magic, the PCs learn what little there is to be heard of the long-dead bandito, the prospector's gold, the Cup of Santiago, and the treasure map itself. The DM should give the players Fragment 1 of Salamanca's map at this time. (The map fragments appear on page 28 and can be photocopied for home game use.)

Chapter 1: Montova the Red

A little more legwork, perhaps concerning the questioning of an NPC who once sailed the Azure Sea, turns up the strongest lead yet: The notorious pirate Montova Rojo has been making not-so-subtle inquiries into the nature of the completed map. Speculation is that Montova possesses a piece of the document and seeks the complete map. If the PCs hope to see even a glimmer of Salamanca's gold, they'll have to confront Montova the Red.

In the event that simple curiosity isn't enough to prompt the PCs to accept the challenge of uniting the sections of the map, the DM has several options to encourage them. One of their home towns might be in desperate need of money to purchase magical protection against a plague. Perhaps they've been asked to prevent the dastardly Montova Rojo from acquiring the treasure. Or maybe the deity of a priest PC has made it known that the recovery of the Cup of Santiago would be a great victory for the church.

Any research on the Cup itself reveals very little, as Santiago is the patron saint of distant Guadalante and thus unfamiliar to most player characters. A successful Religion nonweapon proficiency check indicates that Santiago was martyred 500 years ago when he refused to recant his unorthodox views on the god Pholtus, deity of light and justice. Since that time, Santiago's ideas have been accepted as official church doctrine and his crimes posthumously absolved.

As the pirate Montova lives aboard his vessel, the agile *Gato Rojo*, the PCs must track him on the high seas. When they reach a suitable coastal city, they'll either have to board a ship of their own or hire one, for 100 gold pieces per day, with an additional "danger pay" of 50 gp per day if the PCs mention the fact that their quarry is none other than Montova the Red. The only captain courageous enough to brave the wrath of the *Gato Rojo* is a former adventurer named Jackdaw. The unflappable Jackdaw is a half-orc, his ship is called the *Lady Lynn Rob*, and his crew is a menagerie of outcasts, misfits, and men too intoxicated by the lure of gold to be frightened of Montova and his ready blade.

Jackdaw, half-orc male F9: AC 3; MV 12; hp 55; THAC0 10 (base 12); #AT 2/1 or 3/2; Dmg by weapon type; Str 14, Dex 17, Con 13, Int 12, Wis 7, Cha 13; ML 15; AL CG; *leather armor +2, cutlass +1* (specialized). In various pouches on his belt, Jackdaw carries a few varied coins from ports the world over.

Crew members, human males F2 (10): AC 10; MV 12; hp 11 each; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; ML 14; AL CG. Each crewman is armed with a short sword and an assortment of daggers.

Lady Lynn Rob (cog): MV 9; Seaworthiness 17; Pursuit 1d6+3; Maneuverability 1d6; SZ L; Crew 20/8/4; Passengers 5; Cargo 150 tons; hull points 30. The *Lynn* is a tidy ship, fresh with new rigging and mended sails, outfitted with two medium ballistae. While a detailed account of ship mechanics and ship-to-ship combat can be found in the AD&D sourcebook *Of Ships and the Sea*, a truncated version of these rules is given below.

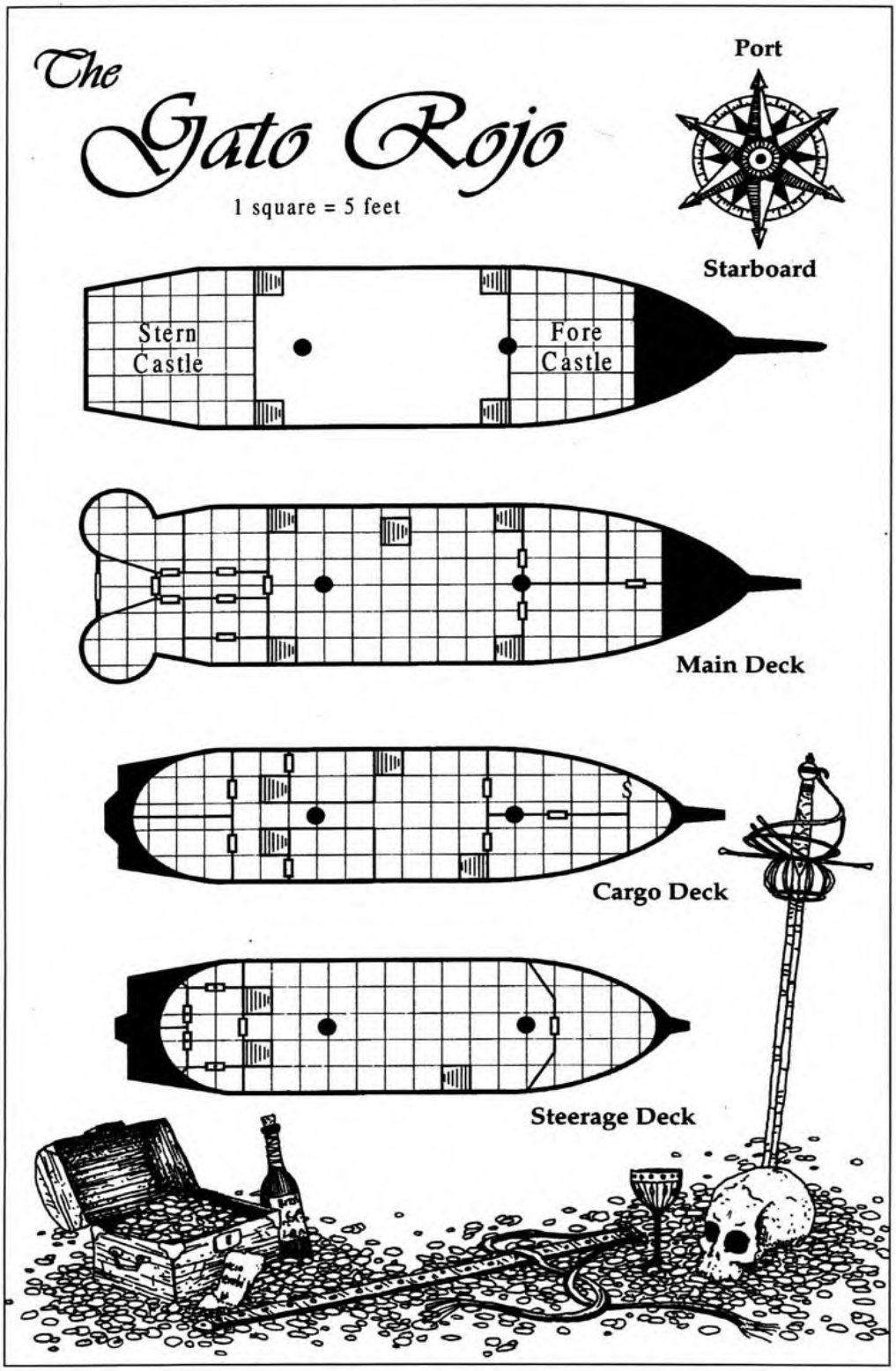
Pirate Hunting

The DM should harry the *Lynn* across the sea for as many days as necessary, inserting monstrous and meteorological encounters where appropriate. The PCs should have at least one opportunity to get their sea legs by combating aquatic monsters, anything from saltwater trolls to the mythic kraken. Eventually, Jackdaw's unerring sense of direction guides the ship to the last known anchoring point of Montova the Red, just off the northern Guadalantean coast. Read or paraphrase the following as soon as the PCs are within visual range of the *Gato Rojo*:

> Sure enough, the flashes of scarlet you spotted an hour ago are indeed the blood-red sails of the *Gato Rojo*, the battle-hardened vessel of Montova the Red. But as you draw nearer, you can clearly see that the *Gato Rojo* is under attack! Though renowned for her nimbleness in the water, the *Gato* is apparently succumbing to the fearsome assault of another vessel. From this distance it's impossible to discern the identity of the second ship, but one thing is certain: If the *Gato Rojo* is sunk, all hope of retrieving Salamanca's gold sinks with her.

PCs using spyglasses or *clairvoyance* can see enough details of the attacking vessel to easily discern her standards. She flies two flags, one the skull and crossbones of the jolly roger, the second the white-on-blue flag of the nation of Guadalante, signifying that this is a privateer's ship, a pirate under some kind of government or guild contract. Painted along her hull in garish gold calligraphy is the name *El Despiadado*.

The captain of *El Despiadado* has been hired by the don of the province of Escudor, one Baron Misael Castillo. The baron knows of the sundered map and has taken steps to find the treasure and claim it as his own. His young wife, Anna Maria, is Salamanca's great-granddaughter. Although she is terribly ashamed of her great-grandfather's reputation, Anna



Maria wasn't quite ready to give up the family heirloom he once possessed: a mangled map fragment written in his own hand. She refused to part with it, even when her husband demanded it; so Baron Castillo promptly stole it.

Actually he only borrowed it, sneaking it away so that his scribes could copy it, and for now his wife lets him continue to believe she is unaware of his duplicity. Further details of the don and Anna Maria are provided later in the adventure.

The PCs have at least three options after spotting the ongoing battle between the *Gato Rojo* and *El Despiadado*. They can let the combat play itself out, in which case the *Gato Rojo* is overwhelmed. The map section finds its way aboard the privateer's ship, and eventually to the baron's villa—unless the PCs intervene and attack *El Despiadado* en route. Secondly, the PCs can attempt to board one or both vessels via magic or stealth, hoping to take advantage of the melee and steal the fragment from Montova's private quarters. Finally, the PCs can encourage Captain Jackdaw to take the *Lady Lynn Rob* into battle, engaging one or both enemy ships. Jackdaw's men fight as long as their morale holds, and even longer if the PCs have promised monetary rewards for a successful mission.

Ship-to-ship combat can be handled in one of two ways. If the DM is interested in a protracted sea battle involving complicated maneuvers and long-range missile fire, the rules in *Of Ships and the Sea* should prove invaluable; the necessary ship statistics have been included below. For a more streamlined encounter, see the ocean-voyaging guidelines on pages 170 and 171 of the *DUNGEON MASTER® Guide*. When firing a ballista, treat all targets as AC 10, modified by range categories of 10/20/30. A successful hit indicates 1d3 points of hull damage. A ballista has a THAC0 of 14, fires at a rate of 1/3, and requires a crew of two sailors to operate. An attack roll of a natural 20 indicates double damage. Any ship that suffers a critical hit or has its hull points reduced by 75% must make an immediate Seaworthiness check or begin sinking into the frothing brine.

Use the *Gato Rojo* map when the PCs board the vessel. As all three ships are generally of the same class, this map can be applied to every ship as necessary, with appropriate alterations made by the DM.

Although the *Gato Rojo* is doomed and eventually goes under as a result of damage she's already sustained, *El Despiadado* gives up the fight and flees at full sail if the battle is going badly.

Gato Rojo (cog): MV 11; Seaworthiness 14; Pursuit 1d6+3; Maneuverability 1d6+1; SZ L; Crew 20/8/4; Passengers 5; Cargo 150 tons; hull points 17. The red-sailed *Gato* currently has a crew contingent of 10, as several sailors have already become casualties of the baron's obsession. The *Gato Rojo* boasts two ballistae, although only one is currently operational, as all remaining hands are locked in mortal contention with the enemy. Sailor and siege-engine statistics for both pirate ships are identical to those of the *Lynn*, detailed above.

In the captain's quarters of either ship (located on the aft Main Deck) can be found a large-scale map of Guadalante. Show the players the map on the next page.

Montova the Red, human male F6: AC 6; MV 12; hp 36; THAC0 14 (base 15); #AT 3/2 or 1; Dmg by weapon type; Str 15, Dex 11, Con 14, Int 11, Wis 11, Cha 10; ML 14; AL NE; XP 420. The pirate captain wears leather armor and carries a saber, the preferred weapon of Guadalantean duelists. He wears a *ring of protection* +2 made of coral and jade.

Montova has folded Fragment 2 of Salamanca's map and placed it in a snuff box he stores in the locked writing desk in his quarters. If the PCs capture Montova, they'll find it difficult getting him to talk. The pirate has a sick fascination with pain, especially his own, and will not surrender what he knows on the threat of a little personal agony. However, one effective way of forcing the truth from him is to make him walk the plank. Montova can't swim, and his fear of drowning is equaled in intensity only by his fear of sharks. Having seen only his portion of the map, Montova was following an educated assumption that the phrase "NCIA" on his section must pertain to the village of Valencia. He was headed there to conduct further investigations when his ship was attacked.

El Despiadado (cog): MV 9; Seaworthiness 17; Pursuit 1d6+3; Maneuverability 1d6; SZ L; Crew 20/8/4; Passengers 5; Cargo 150 tons; hull points 27. The ship currently boasts 20 sailors and is armed with 3 medium ballistae. Heavily ornamented, *El Despiadado* is a testament to the success of her captain, Rafael Nightstar. The DM should flesh out the details of Rafael's quarters in a manner consistent with the nature of his ship, should the PCs find themselves aboard this vessel. Rafael's statistics are similar to those of Montova the Red. Though Rafael retreats with his vessel if matters turn against him, there is a chance that he'll be captured and successfully interrogated. He knows only that Don Castillo hired him to steal the map fragment from the *Gato Rojo*. He doesn't know why.

Joining the Map Fragments

Once the PCs' portion of the map is joined with Montova's, a single word is clearly legible: VALENCIA. Though this name is meaningless to PCs unacquainted with Guadalante, a little investigation reveals the nature of this poor and sun-beaten village. In the event that this large-scale map isn't recovered from one of the two pirate ships, the PCs can still learn of Valencia once Jackdaw docks the *Lynn* and bids them farewell in the town of Tonada.

At the conclusion of this encounter, the PCs will either possess a second section of Salamanca's map or they'll be following Rafael Nightstar to the city of Puerto Mia with the intention of wresting the fragment from him at an opportune time. If they fail to intercept Rafael before he delivers the fragment, the PCs find themselves in a dire situation indeed, as Baron Castillo's defenses are difficult to overcome without inside assistance, as will be discussed later in the adventure.

Making Landfall

The PCs eventually make landfall in the small coastal town of Tonada. Though Tonada isn't detailed in this adventure, the DM should flesh out the city's denizens and environs as he or she sees fit. Tonada serves only as a waystation for the PCs as they gather information on the village of Valencia.

No forms of metal armor are available in Tonada or anywhere else in Guadalante, as the average mean temperature is simply too high to make such attire practical. To reflect the generally torrid weather conditions, the DM should impose penalties to those who insist on wearing armor. Consider the average temperature to be 85° F during the day and 50°F at night. For characters in leather, padded, ringmail, chainmail, scalemail, and banded mail armor, the effective temperature rises 20°. Those in plate, field plate, and full

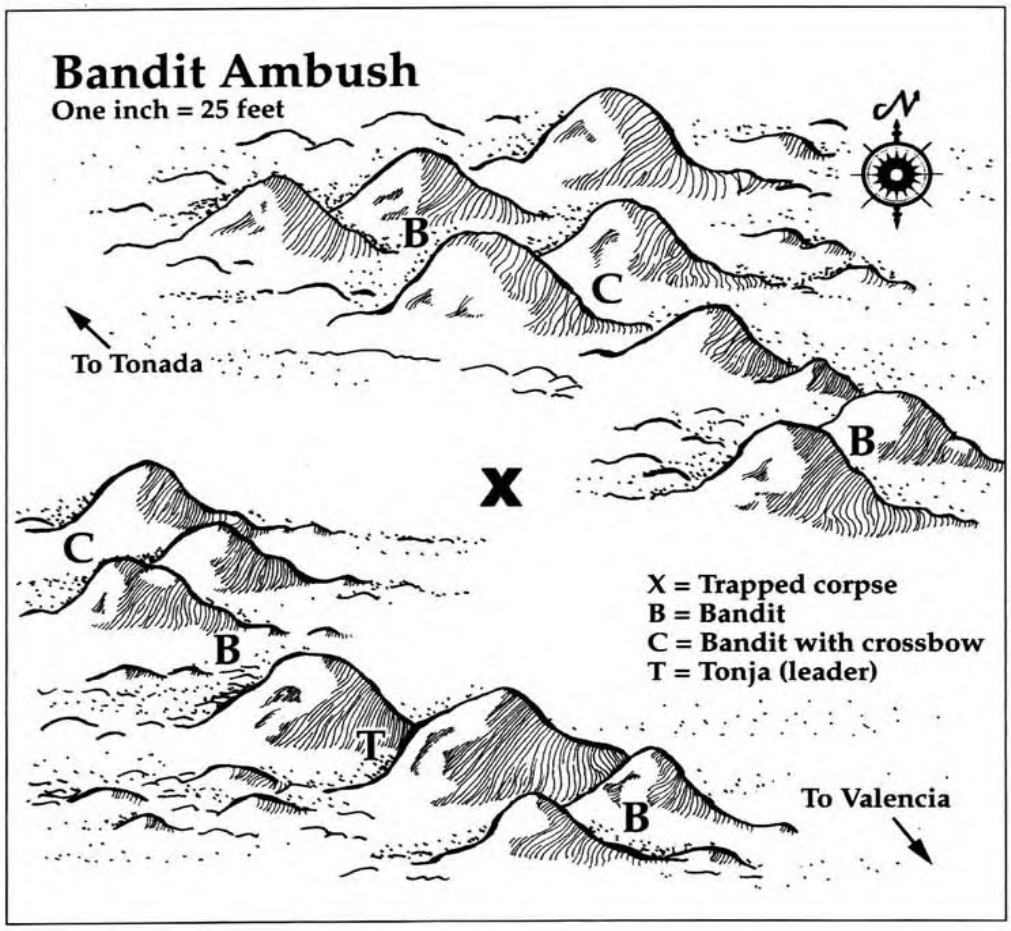


plate feel as if the temperature is actually 30° above the actual temperature. Anyone with a personal temperature of 90 to 99° suffers a –1 penalty to all Strength and Constitution checks and fights and moves as if lightly encumbered. Personal temperatures ranging from 100 to 109° impose –2 penalties, while movement rates and attack rolls are those of someone moderately encumbered. Temperatures from 110 to 119° increase the penalty and encumbrance levels by an additional increment (–3 and heavily encumbered, respectively), and a personal temperature of 120° or higher penalizes the character by –4 and limits his or her movement rate to 1.

Chapter 2: Bandito Ambush!

The journey through the badlands to Valencia should take no longer than two days on horseback, or twice that if the PCs can't afford to purchase pack animals and opt to travel on foot. The land east of Tonada turns rugged, the vegetation becomes sparse, and the sun seems to take on a new and dangerous attitude toward those who travel beneath it. Hunting is difficult due to the lack of game. Check for random encounters two times each day; possible encounters include common desert predators such as scorpions and snakes. To keep things interesting, at least one PC should awake in the middle of the night with a rattlesnake sharing his or her bedroll.

When the PCs close to within a few hours of Valencia, trouble finds them. Only a character with the Danger Sense nonweapon proficiency has any hope of anticipating the ambush that the banditos have prepared along the trail. Regardless of the route the PCs have taken, they eventually fall prey to a deadly ambush. Unless extreme measures have been taken as a precaution, the PCs are automatically surprised as seven desert bandits launch a sudden attack from the nearby cover of the rocks.

The area marked with an X denotes the location of a corpse—the remains of a bandit who angered the gang's leader. Having been dead only a matter of hours, the body has yet to decay, and when the PCs approach, they'll have no way of knowing the exact status of the man lying crumpled on the ground before them. Should one of the PCs investigate, he or she must make a saving throw vs. spell the moment he or she touches the body, as the dead bandit has been trapped with a spell called *Tonja's touchtrap*. This spell is detailed below:

Tonja's Touchtrap
(Alteration)
Level: 2
Range: 50 yards + 5 yards/level
Components: V, S, M
Casting Time: 2
Duration: 1 turn/level
Area of Effect: 1 object
Saving Throw: Negates

Created by the bandit-mage Tonja as an effective trap to snare unsuspecting travelers, *Tonja's touchtrap* can be cast on any nonliving object roughly man-sized or smaller. Casting this spell coats the object in an invisible and magical adhesive that automatically bonds to whatever touches it. Only a successful saving throw vs. spell prevents the offending article from being stuck to the *touchtrap* for the limit of the spell's duration. The only way to extricate oneself from the *touchtrap* before the spell expires is by a timely application of *universal solvent*, a successful *dispel magic*, or a *limited wish*. The material component for the spell is the object to be trapped.

As soon as one of the PCs touches the corpse, Tonja (the leader) orders her fellow banditos to attack. Tonja is a wizard employed by the bandit chief, under orders to patrol the region north of Valencia. Tonja has positioned her troops as shown on the adjacent map. While Tonja herself fires spells from behind a barricade of boulders, two of her men provide cover with light crossbows while the remaining four rush down the rocky hill and attack.

Tonja, human female W7: AC 10; MV 12; hp 16; THAC0 18; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type or spell; SD *stoneskin* spell; Str 8, Dex 15, Con 14, Int 15, Wis 12, Cha 15; ML 14; AL LE; XP 975; *wand of paralyzation* (see below), potion of *flying* (two doses), waterskin.

Spells (4/3/2/1): 1st—*charm person* (×2), *magic missile* (×2); 2nd—*blindness, invisibility, Tonja's touchtrap* (already cast); 3rd—*lightning bolt, wraithform*; 4th—*stoneskin* (already cast).

Tonja dresses like any other desert marauder, in high leather boots, a billowing white scarf, and a wide-brimmed hat to protect her from the unrelenting sun. On a whim she mounted her *wand of paralyzation* on her crossbow, rigging it so that the command word has been replaced by a trigger pull. Though the wandbow still performs the functions of a standard wand, it does so with bit more flair. It has 19 charges remaining.

Banditos, human males F2 (6): AC 10; MV 12; hp 12 each; THAC0 19 (base); #AT 3/2 or 1; Dmg by weapon type; ML 13; AL LE; XP 65. Each man carries a saber, a dagger, and 2d12 gp. Two of them are also armed with light crossbows. Like all combatants in Guadalante, these men have poor Armor Class ratings due

to their lack of protective armor. However, to reflect the Guadalantean penchant for dueling, they are all considered to be specialists in the saber. They often use their additional attacks to perform parry maneuvers, or even attempt disarms against their opponents.

As long as Tonja and her snipers remain behind the 75% cover of the boulders, all attacks against them are made at –4 to hit. If seriously pressed, Tonja escapes via *invisibility, wraithform*, or her potion and delivers a full report to her superior, Bandvong.

Chapter 3: Valencia in Peril

The village of Valencia is dying.

Built upon the outer rim of a once-prosperous copper mine, Valencia dwindled considerably after the ore ran out. Most of the miners pulled up stakes and moved on to more promising locations. Those too poor to afford the trip across the Serobi Wastes remained behind, growing what they could in the hostile soil.

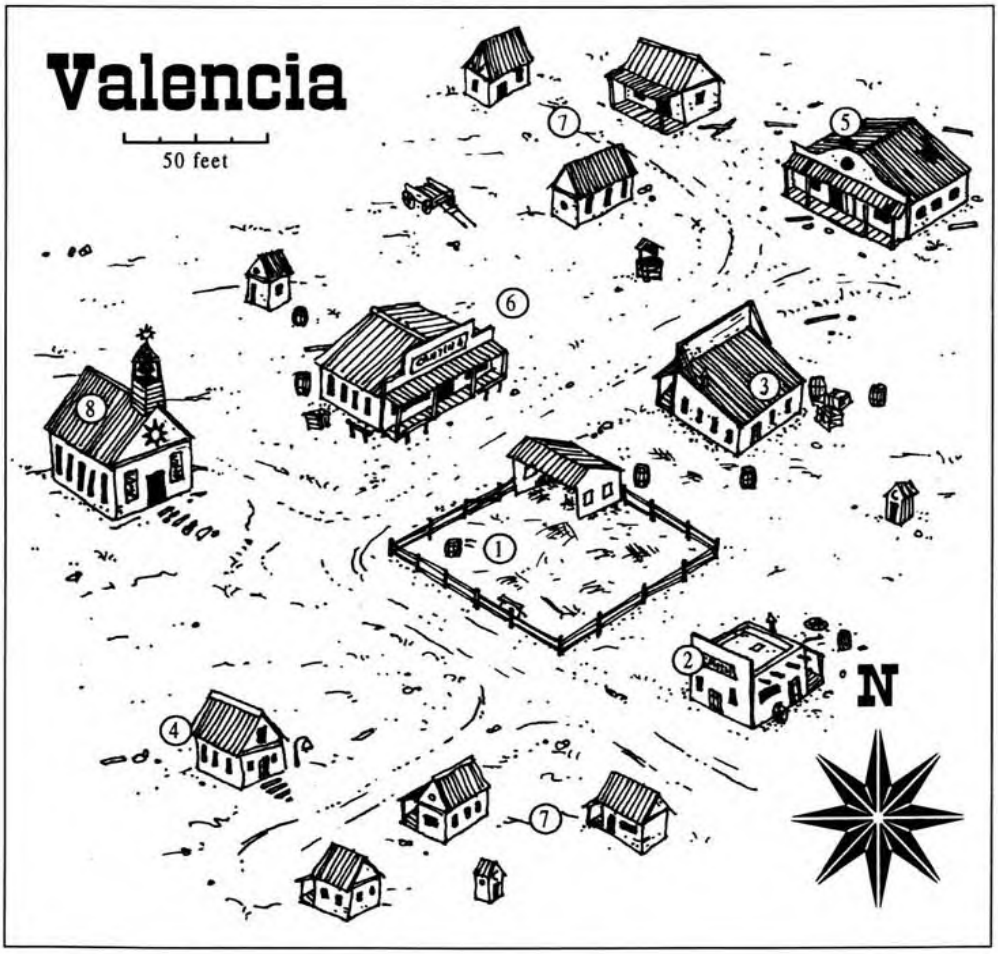
One hundred people dwell in this village, earning a meager living any way they can. Most are farmers, as poor as the dirt in which they toil, while a few work with wild desert mustangs or scrounge the last traces of metal from the copper mine. Once a month a wagon arrives from Tonada, bringing vital trade goods such as linen, alcohol, and fish.

The only thing that prevents the people of Valencia from simply packing up and abandoning the town is the gang of desperados called Bandvong's Army. Bandvong is a half-orc foreigner, an outlander with a deadly proclivity for swordplay. Having been wronged one too many times by Baron Misael Castillo, the bandit leader vowed to make life hard on the people of the province of Escudor. So far his vow has spread no farther than the Serobi Wastes, which he governs with a sense of misguided justice and a reputation for intolerance. Bandvong's Army is really nothing but a large company of criminals, the strings of their ramshackle loyalty loosely held together in Bandvong's sweaty fist.

The half-orc uses Valencia as his base of operations, returning here once a week or so, demanding food and lodging from the villagers. He's issued an order that prevents any of the villagers from leaving, upon punishment of death. After all, his army needs to be fed, their equipment mended, their horses shod. Though a few brave citizens have managed to sneak out under the cover of darkness, the bulk of the populace has been effectively cowed into submission.

All except Padre Juan Silva.

As the village's spiritual advisor and self-appointed protector, Padre Silva bears the burden of the half-orc's cruelty more heavily than most. Yet he is only one man and is forced to grind his fists defenselessly as Bandvong's men harass his parishioners. The banditos routinely have their way with the villagers, taking what they want, whom they want, whenever they want.



As if in answer to the padre's prayers, the PCs emerge from the wasteland. They come seeking clues to the whereabouts of the remaining portions of the map. And as it turns out, Padre Silva knows something of the dead renegade, Salamanca, but he remains tight-lipped until the time is right to cut a deal.

Read the following to the players once the PCs reach the desert village of Valencia:

> **Valencia is really nothing more than a smattering of earth-colored buildings on the rim of a played-out copper mine. Most of the structures are fashioned of stone, slate-roofed and bleached white by the sun, with ringlets of dirt stirring in the dusty lane that serves as the town's central street. You see a few humans and a dwarf or two sitting in the meager shade afforded by open doorways, some mopping the sweat from their faces, some just staring at the waterless sky. Curtains hang listlessly in windows devoid of glass, and the air ripples in the distance as it boils in the heat. As you approach, an ancient man with skin like dry leather gazes up at you, shielding his eyes from the sun. He looks at you as if you're nothing more than an approaching mirage.**

The atmosphere pervading the town is one of thirst and weariness, and the DM is encouraged to impress upon the players the heavy weight of desperation that hangs almost palpably in the air. Of the village's one hundred inhabitants, fifteen are children, twenty are elderly folks, and the remaining sixty-five are human and dwarven men and women of working age who spend up to 14 hours a day trying to scratch sustenance from the soil. Only on Godsday do they permit themselves to rest. The PCs arrive in late afternoon the day before this holy day. A few of the places they might visit are detailed below.

Unless otherwise noted, all villagers are 0-level with the following statistics: AC 10; MV 12 or 6; hp 1d6; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; ML 8; AL LG.

1. Stable. A sundered dwarf named Carlo and his two sons oversee the town stable, where

wild mustangs are corralled until they are tamed and traded for goods or stolen by Bandvong's legion. Currently half a dozen horses are kept here, high-spirited but malnourished.

2. Smithy. Enrique and his family operate this blacksmith shop. Enrique is blind in one eye, the result of a branding iron brought to bear as punishment for insulting one of Bandvong's soldiers. Enrique has since learned obedience.

3. Dry Goods. A burly ex-sailor named Salazar barters a few trade items and a bit of common foodstuff from this once-proud business. Salazar despises the bandits and yearns for justice. On the secret pages of his heart are written the words of revenge, but as of yet he's not found the courage to read them aloud. There is only a 20% chance that his store holds any particular piece of equipment the PCs require.

4. Schoolhouse. The town mayor, or alcalde, also serves as the schoolmaster. His name is Jorge Septien, and he is a hopeless sycophant, ready to do Bandvong's bidding. His one-room schoolhouse is adjacent to the town hall.

5. Town Hall. Formerly an imposing structure, the town hall has since fallen into disrepair. The town hall boasts two jail cells, generally unused save for those "criminals" whom Bandvong decides need to spend a few nights behind bars. Currently languishing in lock-up is the town drunk, a rheumy-eyed soothsayer named Chevato.

6. Rio's Cantina. This watering hole is owned and operated by a mustachioed sword-master called Rio. Years retired and given to prolonged periods of dour silence, Rio was once a duelist of some renown. Now apathy and old age have conspired to rob him of any skill he once possessed. Like most people in town, Rio seeks only to live one day at a time and possesses no real will to fight. The only drinks to be had in the cantina are watery beer and a brand of homemade whiskey called bogitos.

At any time, 1d6 locals can be found here, talking softly and fanning their faces in the heat.

7. Homes. These adobe-like structures house those unfortunate enough to call this village home. Most of the folks the PCs encounter—a mixture of humans and dwarves—are beyond the point of hope. They go about their routines, quiet prisoners of their fate. The DM should detail the townspeople as necessary.

8. Church of Ciban. The last bastion of defiance in an otherwise despondent town, the church of Ciban is maintained by Padre Juan Silva, priest of Pholtus and unflagging keeper of the faith. Known in Guadalante as Ciban, Pholtus has only nominal influence in the generally faithless Serobi Wastes. His once-ardent following has now scattered, and only Padre Silva has the sand to hold the ground left in his care. The church itself is a classic mission, adorned with the silver sun symbol of Ciban and a great iron bell above the roof. Padre Silva rings the bell on Godsday morning to summon the faithful, though he longs to ring it as a reveille to call them to arms.

Juan Silva, human male P7: AC 10; MV 12; hp 26; THAC0 16; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type or spell; Str 7, Dex 11, Con 10, Int 13, Wis 17, Cha 15; ML 20; AL LG; holy symbol.

Spells (5/5/3/1): 1st—*bless, cure light wounds* (×2), *light* (×2); 2nd—*know alignment, resist fire* (×3), *slow poison*; 3rd—*continual light, create food and water* (×2); 4th—*cure serious wounds*.

The padre dresses in attire typical of priests who serve in distant missions: long black habit, white collar, and often a broad black hat. He wears a special holy symbol that provides him with a continuous *protection from evil*. His rosary is actually a *necklace of prayer beads*, with one bead of each type.

Whatever place the PCs visit first, Padre Silva soon learns of their arrival and hurries out to meet them. With typical sacerdotal verve, he wastes no time sharing his belief that they are the answer to his prayers—a group of foreigners appearing from the desert like dreams. They can only be Valencia's saviors! Although the padre has learned to be a cautious man, his enthusiasm gets the best of him, and he follows the PCs around town, introducing them to his parishioners and silently appraising their weapons. Convinced that the PCs are his deliverers, Padre Silva accompanies them to the cantina and tells them of the atrocities committed upon the town by Bandvong and his minions. Just a week ago the villains rode off with Manuel and Veronica Romero's fair daughter, Bonita. Bandvong's Army must be stopped. And just because there are over a hundred of them shouldn't dissuade the brave heroes from standing up to them ... or so implores the desperate priest.

If asked about Salamanca and the fabled treasure map, Silva is at first surprised; he has not heard Salamanca's name spoken in quite some time. But as it turns out, he does indeed know something of the legendary thief, as Salamanca died right here in Valencia. It doesn't take Padre Silva long to realize he has something the PCs want. Though he hopes the PCs accept his plea on purely altruistic principles, he isn't above a little honest haggling.

Bandvong's Banditos

That night, as the PCs are sleeping, eating dinner, or making plans for the upcoming struggle, a detachment of Bandvong's Army rides into town. What follows should be a tense, face-to-face encounter between the PCs and several wild-eyed and angry desperados. Unaware of the PCs' arrival, the banditos swagger into Rio's Cantina, demanding drink and entertainment. How the PCs deal with these men is up to them, but the DM should play up the drama of the scene, as stares are met, challenges made, and sabers drawn.

Banditos, human males F2 (12): AC 10; MV 12; hp 12 each; THAC0 19 (base); #AT 3/2 or 1; Dmg by weapon type; ML 13; AL LE; XP 65. Each man carries a saber and a light crossbow, as well as a 2d4 gp tucked somewhere in the grimy folds of his clothes. The banditos are all specialized with the saber.

If the PCs bide their time and allow the banditos to have their way at Rio's, the villains eventually leave, none the wiser to the PCs' plan. In the likely event that the PCs pick a fight, any bandito who escapes quickly informs Bandvong, and the war is on.

One way or the other, Bandvong learns of the PCs' existence. Either a bandit survives to bring him word of the meddling foreigners, or his scouts brief him on the situation around noon of the following day, when the detachment fails to return from Valencia. The half-orc immediately assumes that the adventurers have been hired by Baron Castillo, and he'll take steps to ready himself for a battle.

Holding the Fort

The PCs have several options at this point. They can ignore Padre Silva's pleas and simply demand that he give up what he knows, in which case he has no choice but to acquiesce. He informs them that one of his parishioners once confided during confession of having discovered a torn treasure map from an unmarked grave he was looting. This man's name is Rodrigo y Portillos, the Robber of Redrocks, part-time poet and itinerant musician. Unfortunately, the aging Rodrigo was arrested five years ago by the baron's federales and sentenced to life in the infamous Escudor Territorial Prison. The padre hasn't heard from him since.

Alternately, the PCs can learn of Rodrigo if they cut a deal with Padre Silva and agree to defend the town against Bandvong and his company of killers. If they gather the townspeople and entreat them for assistance, they'll have to be very convincing to rally any support; the nonweapon proficiencies of Oratory and Persuasion prove invaluable in this instance, as will a bit of good roleplaying. Allow the PCs a chance to speak with any

number of villagers they choose. Every time the PCs prove themselves capable of living up to their own promises, a few more folk are swayed. For example, if the PCs successfully fend off a few waves of attackers without harm befalling any of the villagers, there is a chance they might salvage the morale of the entire town and find every man, woman, and child begging them for a chance to pick up a blade and take the battle to Bandvong's doorstep.

Finally, the PCs might wish to avoid any risk to the villagers and conduct an assault on Bandvong's encampment. Though certainly not impossible, this option is much more difficult, as the half-orc is strongest when defending his center of power. A similar course of action might find the PCs orchestrating a series of clandestine raids against the bandit camp. These guerrilla tactics quickly goad Bandvong into leading a massive attack on Valencia.

Bandvong's Camp

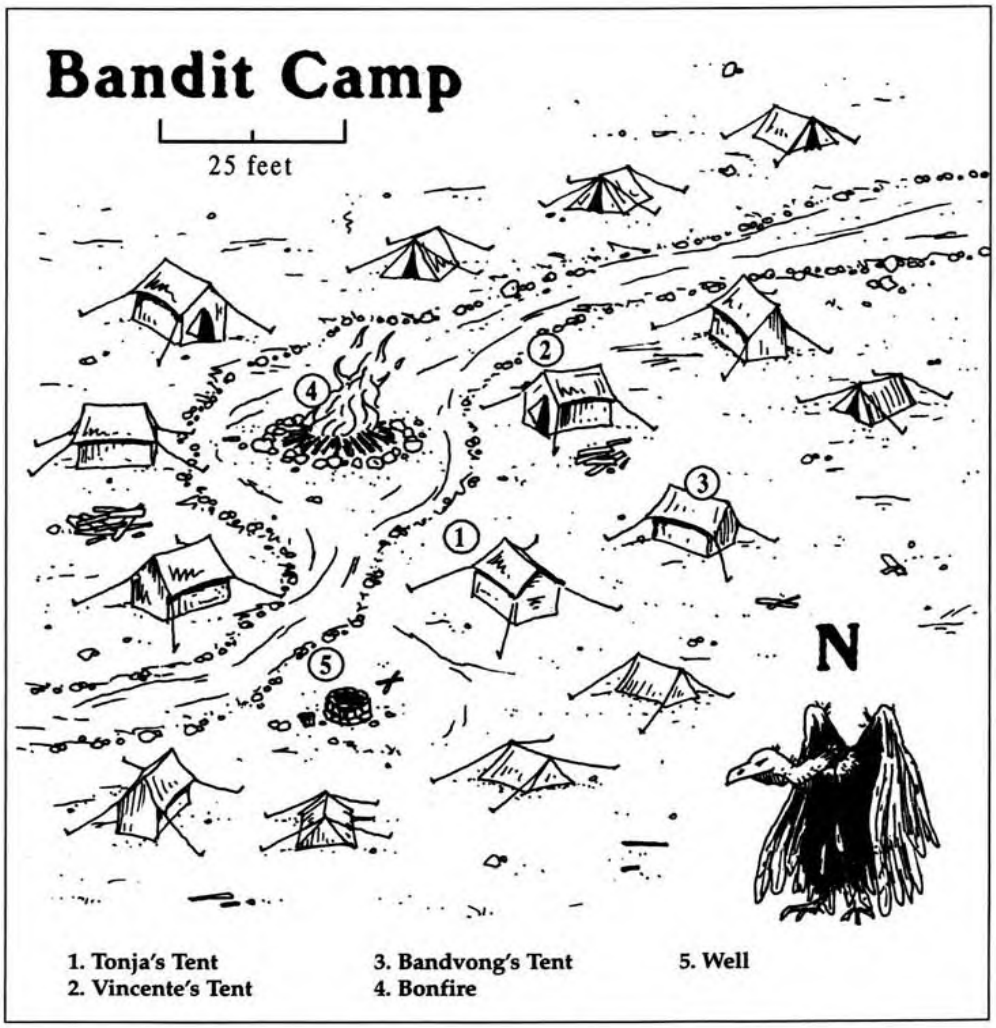
Bandvong's camp is located 13 miles southwest of Valencia. Each tent sleeps 2d6 human and orc banditos, for a total of one hundred minus any already captured or killed by the PCs. There are always at least half a dozen men awake and standing guard, lest the baron's hated federales catch the camp unawares. Bandvong himself occupies the finest tent and can be found here 50% of the time during daylight hours and 80% of the time at night. His tent is flanked by those of his two lieutenants, Tonja the battle-mage and Vincente the excommunicated priest.

Banditos, orc males (20): AC 10; MV 9; HD 1; hp 5 each; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; SZ M; ML 12; Int average (9); AL LE; XP 15; *MM*/281; saber, dagger.

Banditos, human males F2 (up to 80): AC 10; MV 12; hp 12 each; THAC0 19 (base); #AT 3/2 or 1; Dmg by weapon type; ML 13; AL LE; XP 65. Each man totes a saber and light crossbow. One in every 10 crossbow bolts fired is tipped with a venom that inflicts an additional 2d4 points of damage; a successful saving throw vs. poison reduces damage by half.

Vincente, human male P6 (defrocked): AC 10; MV 12; hp 28; THAC0 18; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; Str 10, Dex 12, Con 12, Int 14, Wis 14, Cha 14; ML 11; AL LE; XP 650. No longer able to access his repertoire of priest spells, Vincente is forced to rely on his *rod of absorption* (6 charges remaining) and his *bag of tricks* (type C). He has also recently learned to use the rapier.

Banished forever from the church of Ciban for a long catalog of ineffable crimes, Vincente has found a home here among the dregs of society, only too eager to help Bandvong establish control over the Serobi. Tonsured and garbed in his soiled habit, Vincente still appears to be a peaceful custodian of Ciban's faithful here in the Wastes. Though his morale is sometimes shaky, Vincente has thus far proven himself a capable aide-de-camp.



1. Tonja's Tent
2. Vincente's Tent
3. Bandvong's Tent
4. Bonfire
5. Well

Bandvong, half-orc male F8: AC 4; MV 12; hp 57; THAC0 12; #AT 3/1; Dmg by weapon type; Str 14, Dex 15, Con 16, Int 13, Wis 9, Cha 9; ML 16; AL LE; XP 1,400. Bandvong wears a voluminous *cloak of protection +3* the color of the desert sands. He is further defended by a *ring of protection* +2, on which a permanent *invisibility* spell has been cast, so that no one knows he wears it.

The bandit chief fights with two weapons at once. In his right hand he grips a *saber +1, +2 vs. magic-using and enchanted creatures*, while in his left he holds a *main-gauche* +2. His favorite method of attack is to strike twice with the saber and attempt to parry with the main-gauche.

Bandvong is rarely far from his pair of trained giant vultures, Bosk and Render. These fearsome and ugly birds occupy a roost just outside their master's tent and are ready at a word to harass, torment, or even attack any target that Bandvong designates.

Giant vultures (2): AC 7; MV 3, fly 24 (D); HD 2+2; hp 14 each; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg 1d4; SZ M; ML 10; Int animal (1); AL N; XP 120; *MM*/27.

Bandvong's tent is protected by a *rod of alertness*, which he's stabbed into the earth next to his bedroll. The *rod* warns him when anyone with harmful intentions approaches within 120 feet. In six sacks in his tent is the army's current loot, totaling 1,200 gp, 2,250 sp, and 500 gp in gems, chalices, silverware, and assorted jewelry. Also in his tent, tethered to a stake in the ground and crying softly to herself, is Bonita Romero, kidnapped daughter of Manuel and Veronica of Valencia.

There are several ways for this encounter to unfold. The DM should do what he or she can to ensure that the PCs are not overwhelmed, and that opportunities for roleplay develop from a prolonged series of conflicts between the two opposing parties. An interesting development would be for Bandvong to eventually visit the fortified town of

Valencia under a flag of peace. Once there, he'll parley with the PCs to learn their intentions. Though cruel and vindictive, Bandvong is not irretrievably evil. His central hatred is directed toward Baron Castillo and not the poor people of Valencia. During the course of their conversation, Bandvong mentions the increased patrol activity of the baron's troops. Apparently they're looking for something on the baron's behalf.

If Bandvong loses a substantial portion of his forces and realizes the villagers possess a will to defend themselves, Bandvong crumbles like any bully when faced with the truth of his own insignificance. When the DM is satisfied that the players have roleplayed well and have withstood the punishment of several skirmishes, he or she can decide that Bandvong has had enough. The bandit chief then bids the PCs a respectful farewell and limps back to his camp. However, the PCs haven't necessarily seen the last of him. In fact, they might soon come seeking his aid ...

Once this menace has been dealt with, the PCs can get back to locating Salamanca's gold. Padre Silva is happy to tell them all he knows of Rodrigo y Portillos. After a fiesta in their honor, complete with plenty of lute-playing and foot-stomping, the PCs can head out into the Wastes, bound for the final home of some of Guadalante's most nefarious criminals, the Escudor Territorial Prison.

Chapter 4: Hang 'em High

The DM should impress upon the players the general menace of the desert: the lonesome calls of coyotes at night, the swirling dust devils that come to life without warning, and the carrion birds that circle ominously overhead. Any number of hazards could befall the PCs as they make their way across the hardpan of the Serobi Wastes. Typical encounters include packs of hungry jackals, dust storms, and various sorts of undead seeking a final place of rest. Somewhere along the way, especially if the PCs spend the night in the open desert, three wandering sandmen steal in upon them in hopes of carting them off to a distant dao slave camp.

Sandmen (3): AC 3; MV 9; HD 4; hp 20, 18, 15; THAC0 17; #AT 1; Dmg nil; SA sleep; SD special; SZ M; ML special; Int average (10); AL NE; XP 975; *MCA1*.

Any character coming within 20 feet of a sandman must make a saving throw vs. spell or fall asleep for at least 3 turns; the touch of a sandman causes a similar effect. Sandmen are immune to normal missiles of all kinds. As they despise humans, sandmen need never check morale when battling them. If the sandmen manage to capture the entire group of PCs, their next stop will be the camp of the dao slave-traders. In this event, the PCs are in serious trouble, as the desert genies are formidable foes. The DM should detail the camp as needed.

Also while en route to the prison, the PCs are accosted by a squad of federales.

Captain Esal, human male F5: AC 10; MV 12; hp 29; THAC0 16 (base); #AT 3/2 or 1; Dmg by weapon type; Str 13, Dex 13, Con 14, Int 12, Wis 10, Cha 12; ML 15; AL LN; XP 175; waterskin, rations, saber, dagger.

Baronial troops, human males F3 (7): AC 10; MV 12; hp 15 each; THAC0 17; #AT 3/2; Dmg by weapon type; ML 14; AL LN; XP 65; waterskin, rations, saber, dagger.

Upon spotting the PCs, the troops ride after them and demand that they divulge the nature of their quest. The soldiers wear soiled white uniforms with red sashes, broad-brimmed hats, and dusty black boots. The hilts of their swords flash in the sun.

If the PCs do not present the soldiers with a convincing story, Captain Esal begins to suspect they might be allied with Bandvong. This encounter could go in any direction, from a peaceful parting of the ways to a battle in which one side or the other is slaughtered. How the PCs handle this situation determines their options for dealing with the baron in his villa, when the time comes for such.

Seeing this, the PCs can reach the prison in one of two ways: either as visitors or as new inmates, dragged here in chains by the soldiers. And as it turns out, getting inside as prisoners might be their best option, as they'll otherwise have to infiltrate the compound—a perilous prospect under any circumstances.

The Prison

The prison is depicted on the next page. Read or paraphrase the following when the PCs first come within sight of the structure:

> The Escudor Territorial Prison seems to rise up from the baked earth like the last remains of a long-dead civilization. Surrounded by a dull gray curtain wall, the prison compound is comprised of several blockhouses, only the flat roofs of which are visible over the summit of the wall. A watchtower stands at each corner, and the top of the wall itself seems to be crawling with a tangled, wire-thin vine of some sort. Mounds of dust creep up the base of the wall, and the stones are scarred by years of erosion from wind and blowing sand. The only entrance to this dreary place is a broad iron door in the center of the north wall. The door is wide enough to accommodate a wagon and appears to be hinged at the top. As you approach, the hot breeze changes direction, and you frown as the smell of age and human waste washes over you.

Unless precautions have been taken to the contrary, the PCs are spotted by spyglass long before they reach the prison. Two guards man the wall just above the door, their crossbows at hand. The wall itself is strung with razorvine, a rare form of plant life native to certain Outer Planes, imported long ago to provide additional security at the prison. As its name implies, razorvine is extremely sharp; any PCs attempting to surmount the wall sustain 2d3 points of damage when they come into contact with this deadly vegetation, and 3d6 points if they actually crawl through it. The wall is 20 feet tall.

If the PCs approach the outer gate and state that they wish to see a prisoner named Rodrigo y Portillos, the guards simply yawn and tell them to go lose themselves in the desert, waving their crossbows to emphasize the point. If the PCs are persistent, or if they toss a purse of gold to the guards on the wall, they're informed that a man by that name was indeed a prisoner here, but he's been dead for 2 years. Portillos was executed two summers ago after he attempted to escape. Furthermore, his cell is said to be haunted and is now used for solitary confinement when an inmate needs a little additional punishment.

The guards then reiterate their demand that the PCs leave the area. No visitors are allowed in the prison. No exceptions.

This leaves the PCs with several unanswered questions. If the Robber of Redrocks died in this wretched place, did he take his knowledge of Salamanca's map to the grave? The only way to know for sure is to have a look at his former cell, and that means getting inside the prison. Again, there are two ways to achieve this. The PCs can either intentionally get themselves arrested, or they can attempt to sneak in at night.

The DM should take special care to present the players with an atmosphere of hopelessness, confinement, and decay during their foray into the prison. Nothing comes easily for those who dwell here. The guards are alert and ruthless. Unless otherwise noted, all doors throughout the compound are locked, some more securely than others.

Processing

1. Office. New arrivals to the prison are brought here for processing. Conviction papers are compared to the travel documents of the accompanying officers as the inmates become the charge of Warden Ramirez and his men. This room contains crude office furniture, as well as an intricate set of branding irons. All inmates are permanently marked with a five-digit number on their necks. PCs who are arrested and brought here in shackles face the branding iron, even before they see a magistrate and receive proper sentencing.

Sometimes the baron's justice circumnavigates the troublesome Guadalantean judicial system. Like all buildings in the compound, this one is oppressively hot.

2. Taskmaster's Room. The processing supervisor is a belligerent taskmaster named Antonio, a dwarf known as "the Extractor." Antonio also serves as the warden's master torturer when circumstances require it. His quarters contain standard personal effects. In the bottom of his footlocker is a matched set of throwing *daggers +1*. Antonio can be found here 50% of the time. Like all prison employees, he cries out at the first sign of trouble.

Antonio the Extractor, dwarf male F3: AC 10; MV 12; hp 16; THAC0 18; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; ML 13; AL NE; XP 65. Antonio has a weathered and pocked-marked face, a knotted beard, and strong hands that are especially adept at forcing the truth from recalcitrant prisoners. In combat he wields a *dagger +2* that is coated in vile poison (2d8 points of damage; successful saving throw for half).

Infirmary

3. Medical Office. This unsanitary building serves as the prison's medical headquarters. Common first aid is practiced here, as is rudimentary surgery. Any inmates unlucky enough to fall victim to gangrene or other serious infections find themselves here under the saw of an anatomist named Dr. Drago. The good doctor was a student of magic who was expelled from the academy at Puerto Mia for conducting illegal experiments on stolen cadavers. Now he performs all types of medical services for the guards and convicts, including de-lousing, bloodletting, and the occasional bit of dentistry.

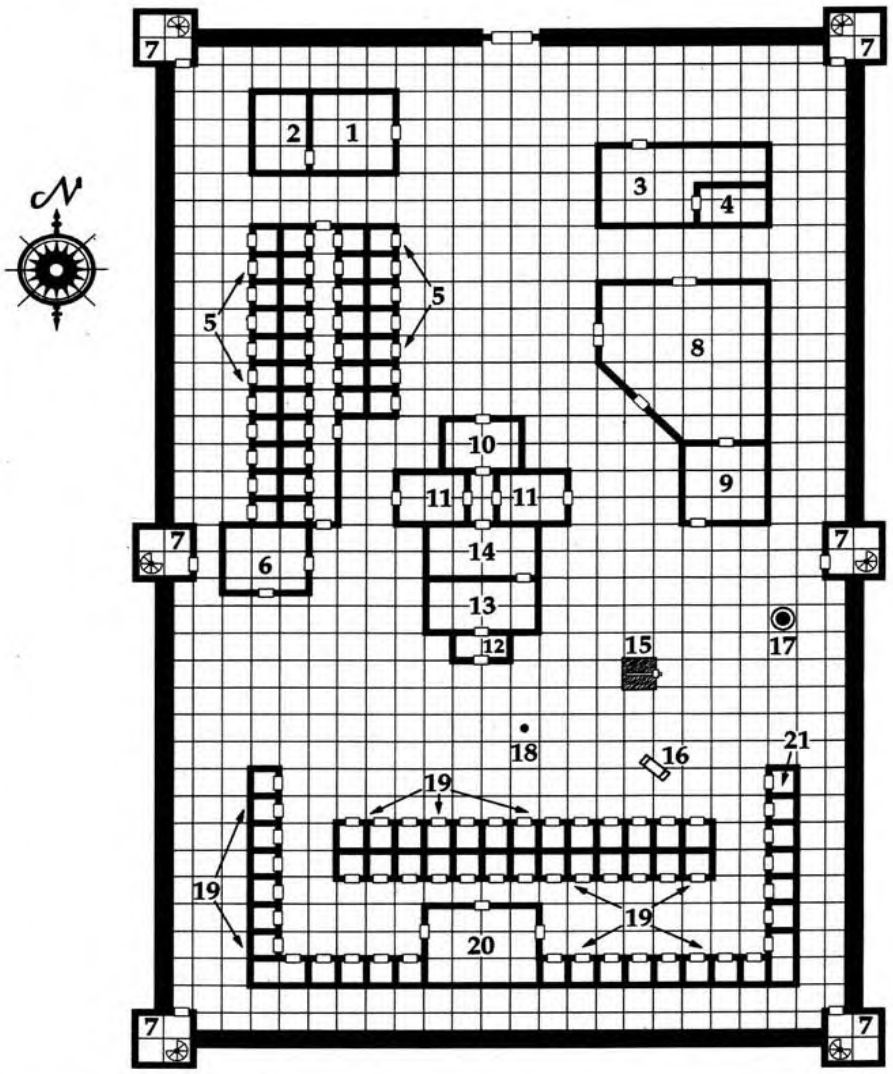
4. Surgeon's Room. This is Drago's personal chamber. Aside from dozens of reference books on the human body, this room also contains a selection of saws, scalpels, and other surgical implements.

Beside Drago's canopy bed stands a tall mahogany cabinet locked and trapped with toxic gas. (A failed saving throw vs. poison indicates 3d10 points of damage, while a successful saving throw indicates none.) It holds Drago's more expensive cutting tools, as well as a *staff of skulls* with 13 charges (detailed in *The Complete Book of Necromancers* and the *ENCYCLOPEDIA MAGICA™*, Volume IV). Drago himself is almost always here, reading or tending to a patient. Should the PCs arrive at the prison to be incarcerated, Drago is eager to examine these mysterious foreigners.

Drago, human male W(Nec)6: AC 10; MV 12; hp 14; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; Str 9, Dex 10, Con 16, Int 17, Wis 13, Cha 7; ML 15; AL LE; XP 650.

The Prison

One square = 10 feet



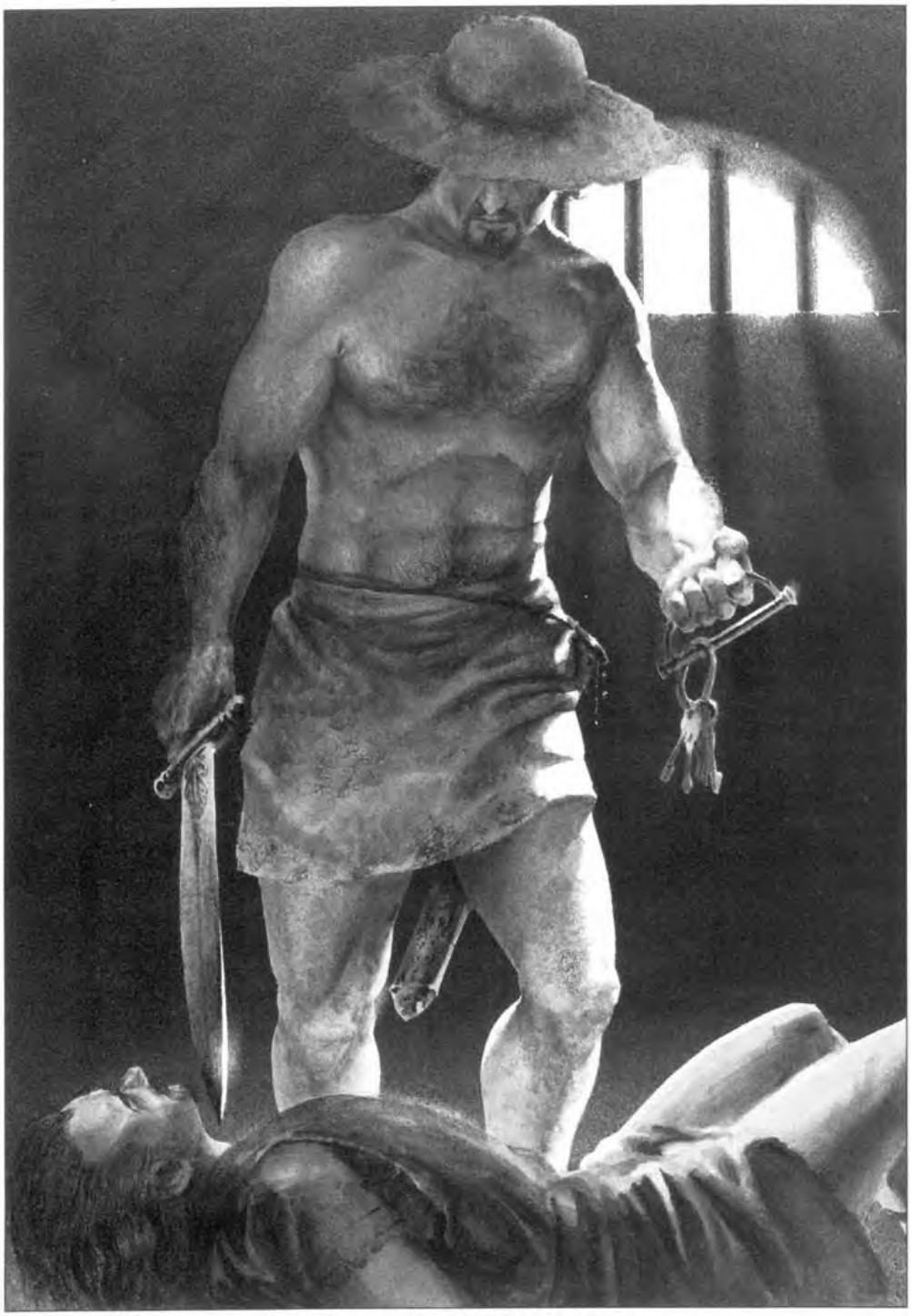
Spells (5/3/3): 1st—*chill touch* (×2), *detect magic, shocking grasp, spider climb*; 2nd—*Melf's acid arrow, pyrotechnics, spectral hand*; 3rd—*dispel magic, feign death, vampiric touch*.

Drago is never without his *ring of the ram*, which he uses quite effectively against anyone who challenges him. The *ring* has 9 charges remaining.

Guards' Quarters

5. Dormitories. Each room houses a single prison guard. There are thirty-five guards total throughout the compound, in addition to the two watch captains, the warden, and the support personnel. Half of the guards are on duty at any given time. There are always 2d4+4 guards present in this building, either asleep in their individual rooms or playing cards or dice in the common area. Only the two watch captains hold the master keys to the cells (areas **19** and **21**).

Prison guards, human males F2 (up to 35): AC 10; MV 12; hp 15 each; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; ML 13; AL LN; XP 65. Each guard carries a club, saber, and a net, as well as a whistle with which to warn his comrades if matters get out of hand.



The dread Warden Ramirez interrogates a hapless prisoner.

6. Gathering Hall. At any time throughout the day, 1d4+1 guards can be found here, enjoying stale food and warm beer. Their weapons are always within easy reach, and they're not easily surprised, ready at a moment's notice to take up arms against rioting prisoners.

7. Guard Towers. These two-story towers are integral to the continued security of the prison. Two guards can always be found in each tower, armed with light crossbows. Each tower boasts doors of iron-banded oak (half the normal Open Doors chance), and each is immediately sealed if a warning whistle is blown. The parapet surrounding the compound can be accessed only from the towers. When firing from this vantage point upon the grounds below, the guards enjoy 75% cover.

Mess Hall

8. Dining Room. This commodious building serves as the dining room for the prison population. Even Warden Ramirez takes his meals here. Food is served at daybreak, noon, and dusk every day. At these times, anywhere from 50 to 100 convicts can be found here, talking lustily among themselves, along with 12+2d8 guards. There are no windows in this building, and the heat is almost intolerable.

9. Kitchen. Six convict cooks work in the kitchen, under the watchful eye of two guards. One of the cooks, a weasel of a man named Felipe, tries to befriend the PCs should they enter the prison as inmates. What Felipe can offer the PCs, and how far he can be trusted, is up to the DM. Felipe is a 0-level human with statistics similar to the villagers of Valencia.

Administration

10. Records Room. This cramped and smelly room is stacked to the eaves with yellowing paperwork. Over one hundred years of documents are stored here, with brief data on every inmate ever to darken these halls.

The DM can plant whatever information he or she chooses here, perhaps sensitive information concerning one of the campaign's prominent NPCs or a document that might serve as the springboard for later adventures.

Amazingly enough, the records here are more or less chronologically arranged, so that a successful Intelligence check can turn up the dossier of Rodrigo y Portillos after 10 minutes of searching. Sure enough, Portillos was sentenced to a life term 5 years ago for multiple counts of robbery and murder. He was executed 2 years ago for attempting to escape. He was hanged.

11. Watch Captains. These are the quarters of the two watch captains, one of whom is always in his room either sleeping or plotting against his fellow guards. Unbeknownst to the watch captains, secret spy holes permit Warden Ramirez to do a little watching of his own (from area **14**).

Watch captains, human males F6 (2): AC 10; MV 12; hp 40, 36; THAC0 15 (base); #AT 3/2 or 1; Dmg by weapon type; ML 15; AL LE; XP 650. Each watch captain carries the standard armament of saber (with which he is specialized) and light crossbow, as well as a *ring of spell storing* containing the spell *hold person* (×4). Each man also has a heavy ring of keys (to areas **12**, **19**, and **21**) and 3d10 gp.

12. Armory. This storage room is known as the Riot Control Center. Racked along the walls are extra sabers and two dozen heavy wooden

shields. The room also contains additional uniforms, as well as helmets, leg irons, and bull whips. Only the warden and the watch captains hold the keys to this room, which is secured with a formidable lock (–25% penalty to Open Locks attempts). There are enough weapons here to arm up to thirty men.

13. Warden's Office. This locked room is where the warden's day-to-day administrative activities are carried out. A staunch ally of Baron Castillo, the warden can often be found here composing official reports or informal letters to the don. On the wall is a detailed map of the entire prison complex.

14. Warden's Quarters. Warden Ramirez sleeps here and eavesdrops on his lieutenants via the secret spy holes behind his bookcases. These bookcases contain mostly travel journals and historical works, although one volume entitled *The Rise and Fall of the Zukite Empire* has been hollowed out to a hold a pearl-inlaid *ring of human influence* that can be used only once per day.

Stitched into the hem of one of the warden's cloaks are 50 pp. Sitting on the writing desk is a piece of lacy writing paper. Upon further examination, the paper turns out to be an invitation to the baron's upcoming birthday celebration. A grand ball is to be held in three days at the baron's villa in Puerto Mia. The warden has been respectfully invited to the ball, with a reminder to dress accordingly. The ball is a formal gathering of nobles and well-to-do families from all over Guadalante. The PCs can later make use of this bit of intelligence if and when they decide to challenge the baron for the fourth and final piece of Salamanca's map.

Unbeknownst even to his watch captains, Warden Ramirez is actually a dao in disguise. As part of a slave-ring that operates throughout the Serobi, Ramirez uses his position as warden to smuggle prisoners to his genie allies. Ramirez has rightly assumed that no one will care about the disappearance of such miscreants should one or two turn up missing every few months.

Warden Ramirez (dao): AC 3; MV 9, fly 15 (B), burrow 6; HD 8+3; hp 35; THAC0 11; #AT 1; Dmg 3d6; SA/SD see below; SZ L; ML 16; Int high (13); AL NE; XP 5,000; *MM*/126.

As a dao, Ramirez has access to the following spell-like powers once per day: *change self, detect good, detect magic, gaseous form, invisibility, misdirection, passwall, spectral force,* and *wall of stone.* He can also use *transmute rock to mud* three times each day and cast *dig* six times per day.

Having studied the art of locksmithing, Ramirez has a unique understanding of locking mechanisms, and it is his personal inspection of individual cells that lends the prison its reputation for being escape-proof. He also carries *iron bands of Bilarro* to capture any fleeing inmates, and his broad-brimmed *hat of disguise* ensures that his true identity remains a secret. He fights with an heirloom *broadsword +1.*

The Yard

The prison yard is simply an open quadrant of hard-packed earth where the inmates congregate after meals to get a little respite from the stagnant air inside their cells.

15. Gallows. Cutting a wicked shadow across the ground, the gallows rises into the air like a silent reminder that death is waiting to claim its next victim.

16. Stocks. Standing on a low wooden platform, these stocks are used to hold unruly inmates. At any given time, there is a 25% chance that someone is currently held in this heavy yoke.

17. Well. This 30'-deep well provides water for the prison population.

18. Flagpole. Driven into the center of this crude stone dais is a wooden flagpole, flying the standard of Guadalante.

Cellhouse

19. Prison Cells. Each of these cramped and fetid 9' × 9' cells houses two inmates. Due to the warden's careful attention to security, anyone attempting an Open Locks check on a cell door must do so at a –15% penalty. Other than a pair of hard bunks bolted to the wall, these cells contain nothing of note, aside from those few items the convicts have managed to conceal under loose stones or between the wormy mattresses.

If the PCs make contact with any of the prison denizens, the cons are scurrilous and untrustworthy. Most of them have long ago abandoned any spark of hope that might have once warmed them in the night. Now they seek only to survive, using any means at their disposal. At the DM's option, the PCs might overhear a recently incarcerated inmate telling another of Don Castillo's interest in a mysterious item lost somewhere in the desert.

20. Bathing Area. The prisoners are herded into this room once each month for a washdown. The long wooden troughs are filled with water, and the inmates scrub down with cakes of lye soap. The cons are ushered here on the basis of seniority, so that the new arrivals must bathe in dirty water.

21. Rodrigo's Cell. On the corner of the cellblock, positioned in such a way so as the morning sun casts the area in a deep and abiding shadow, this cell is unremarkable from the others save that it once caged the robber-poet Rodrigo y Portillos. Any convict who has been put here since Portillos's death has either gone insane or met his end in a mad attempt to escape. In actuality, the cell is haunted by Portillos's restless spirit, which manifests in the form of a haunt.

Rodrigo y Portillos (haunt): AC 0 (or victim's AC); MV 6 (or as victim); HD 5 (or victim's level); hp 40 (or victim's hp); THAC0 15; #AT 1; Dmg special or by weapon; SA see below; SD see below; SZ variable; ML 16; Int non (0); AL LE; XP 2000; *MM*/186.

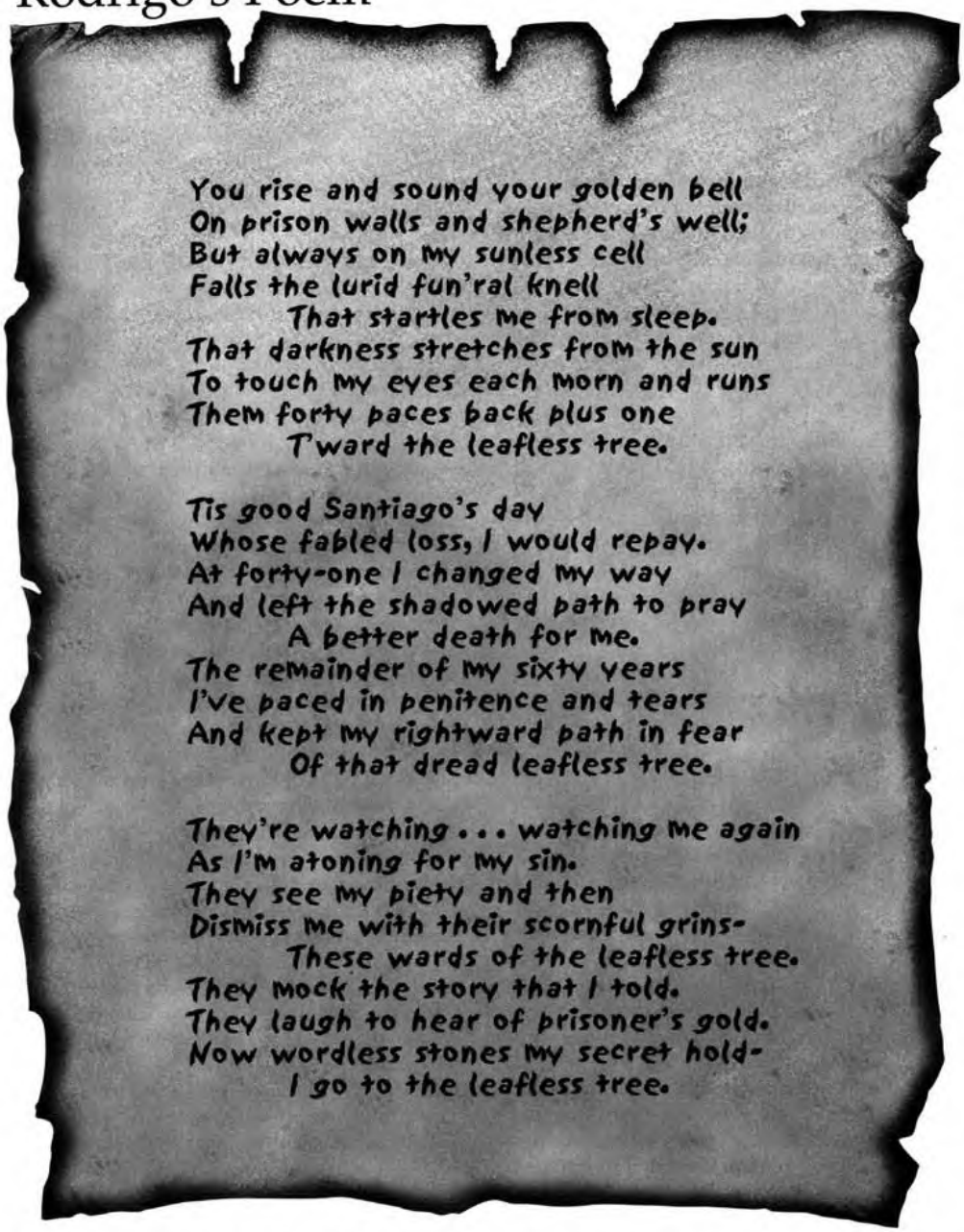
Portillos (in haunt form) is consumed by an overpowering obsession to recover Salamanca's gold. To this end, Portillos attacks any living being who crosses the dreary threshold of his cell. Unable to pass into the yard while confined to the bounds of undeath, Portillos is forced to prey upon those unwise enough to enter his domain. He materializes a few minutes after the PCs enter his cell, attacking one of them at random until he has possessed the character's body. Each attack drains 2 points of Dexterity from the victim, causing increasing numbness until the character's Dexterity reaches 0, at which point Portillos seizes control of the paralyzed body; he then assumes the statistics of his host and can make use of all the host's normal combat skills, save intelligence-based talents (such as spells). Once he's inhabited a healthy body, Portillos attempts to flee his cell, driven by a supernatural impulse to seek out a treasure he has no real hope of ever finding. If Portillos sustains sufficient damage while controlling a host body, the character is killed and Portillos is released to once again resume his haunting. Only by reducing his haunt form to 0 hit points or reuniting the four sections of the map can Portillos's spirit be placated.

Once the haunt is finally laid to rest, the PCs can turn their attention to inspecting the cell. In all respects but one it resembles exactly all other cells in the block. If the PCs are successful in their search for secret doors, one of them notices that a single bar in the cell door seems to be loose in its moorings. A successful Strength check can wrest the bar free from the door. Unlike the other bars, this one is hollow and holds a furled scroll inside.

The scroll represents Portillos's last attempt at poetic verse. In its stanzas are hidden the clues necessary to finding the lost fragment of the map. Show the players the handout on the next page.

Though at first the poem might seem obscure, the correct route to the hiding place is actually quite evident when the reader separates Portillos's lamentations over life from his directions to the map. Portillos's age at death—sixty—equates to the number of paces

Rodrigo's Poem



You rise and sound your golden bell
On prison walls and shepherd's well;
But always on my sunless cell
Falls the lurid fun'ral knell
That startles me from sleep.
That darkness stretches from the sun
To touch my eyes each morn and runs
Them forty paces back plus one
T'ward the leafless tree.

Tis good Santiago's day
Whose fabled loss, I would repay.
At forty-one I changed my way
And left the shadowed path to pray
A better death for me.
The remainder of my sixty years
I've paced in penitence and tears
And kept my rightward path in fear
Of that dread leafless tree.

They're watching . . . watching me again
As I'm atoning for my sin.
They see my piety and then
Dismiss me with their scornful grins-
These wards of the leafless tree.
They mock the story that I told.
They laugh to hear of prisoner's gold.
Now wordless stones my secret hold-
I go to the leafless tree.

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from his cell door to the lost fragment. To follow the clues, one of the PCs must stand in the doorway of the cell and face the famous "leafless tree"—Portillos's metaphor for the gallows. After taking forty-one paces toward the gallows, the PC turns toward the well, where he or she walks exactly nineteen paces. "The remainder of my sixty years," or sixty minus forty-one, is nineteen.

Once at the well, the PC must assume a penitent posture of prayer, as indicated in the poem. Any character on his or her knees can see under the stone lip of the well, where an otherwise invisible horizontal slit between the stones marks the location of the cache. Hidden in this slit is Fragment 3 of Salamanca's map (depicted on page 28).

Chapter 5: Crashing the Party

By now the PCs might suspect that Baron Castillo holds the final piece of the puzzle. The collective clues include the governmental flag on the privateer's ship, Bandvong's comments about increased federales patrols, and the gossip they hear between certain prison inmates. If the PCs haven't figured it out yet, further prompting arrives only hours after they leave the prison, in the form of baronial troops. This patrol is under direct orders to apprehend any suspicious wanderers, as the baron's recent employment of *contact other plane* informed him that three of the map fragments have been reunited and are on the move somewhere in the Serobi Wastes. Although the spell didn't provide him with the identities of the PCs, Castillo knows that a serious challenge exists in his quest to acquire the map.

The statistics for the nine soldiers and their captain are identical to those listed above. In the name of Don Misael Castillo they demand that the PCs relinquish all their possessions. It is unlikely that the PCs will escape this encounter without a fight.

Assuming they survive the encounter with Castillo's soldiers, the PCs' next stop is Puerto Mia. The PCs can ride there in a day and a half, or walk the distance in three, which finds them in town only a few hours before the baron is to host his grand fiesta. Cautious players will want to conduct reconnaissance on the villa; give them every opportunity to study the baron's home. Sitting on the cliffs overlooking the harbor, the villa is well fortified, with house guards positioned as depicted on the map of Castillo's villa.

Baron Castillo's Villa

Though a furtive infiltration of the villa is a viable option (and certain parties will be more suited for this kind of stealthy operation than others), a more entertaining tactic involves donning the fine dress of dandies and ladies and attending the party as guests. This permits the PCs to strike at the baron from the inside, though it might limit their selection of equipment to those items that the house guards allow visitors to carry. Although large weapons such as bastard swords and battleaxes must be checked at the door, sabers, rapiers, and broadswords are considered an accepted part of a gentleman's ensemble. The baron's elegant gathering should provide a welcome contrast to the dirty confines of the prison. PCs are encouraged to treat themselves to an evening of flamenco dancing and luxurious entertainment, insinuate themselves in the intrigue of the Guadalantean royalty, and simultaneously close in on the fourth and final piece of Salamanca's map.

Much of the baron's villa has been left undescribed. Though the full extent of dining rooms, bedrooms, pantries, and studies can be colorfully detailed by the DM, only those chambers directly necessary to the recovery of the map fragment have been included here.

Should he or she hope to embroil the PCs in future political or romantic alliances in Guadalante, the DM can provide appropriate descriptions for the remainder of the villa. Perhaps one of the PCs is dragged into the game room by a lady aristocrat who hopes to enlist aid in a plan of revenge against her adulterous husband. Or maybe a wealthy musician is mounting an expedition to recover the lost notebooks of a long-dead composer. Whatever angle the DM wishes to pursue, the baron's ball should provide several opportunities for secret liaisons and future adventure.

Keep in mind that any of the federales the PCs fail to subdue in the desert could show up here during the ball to cause varying degrees of trouble. Depending on earlier events, the don might be aware of the PCs' presence—perhaps he even knows their names and faces! Fearing such discovery, clever PCs might want to attend the party incognito.

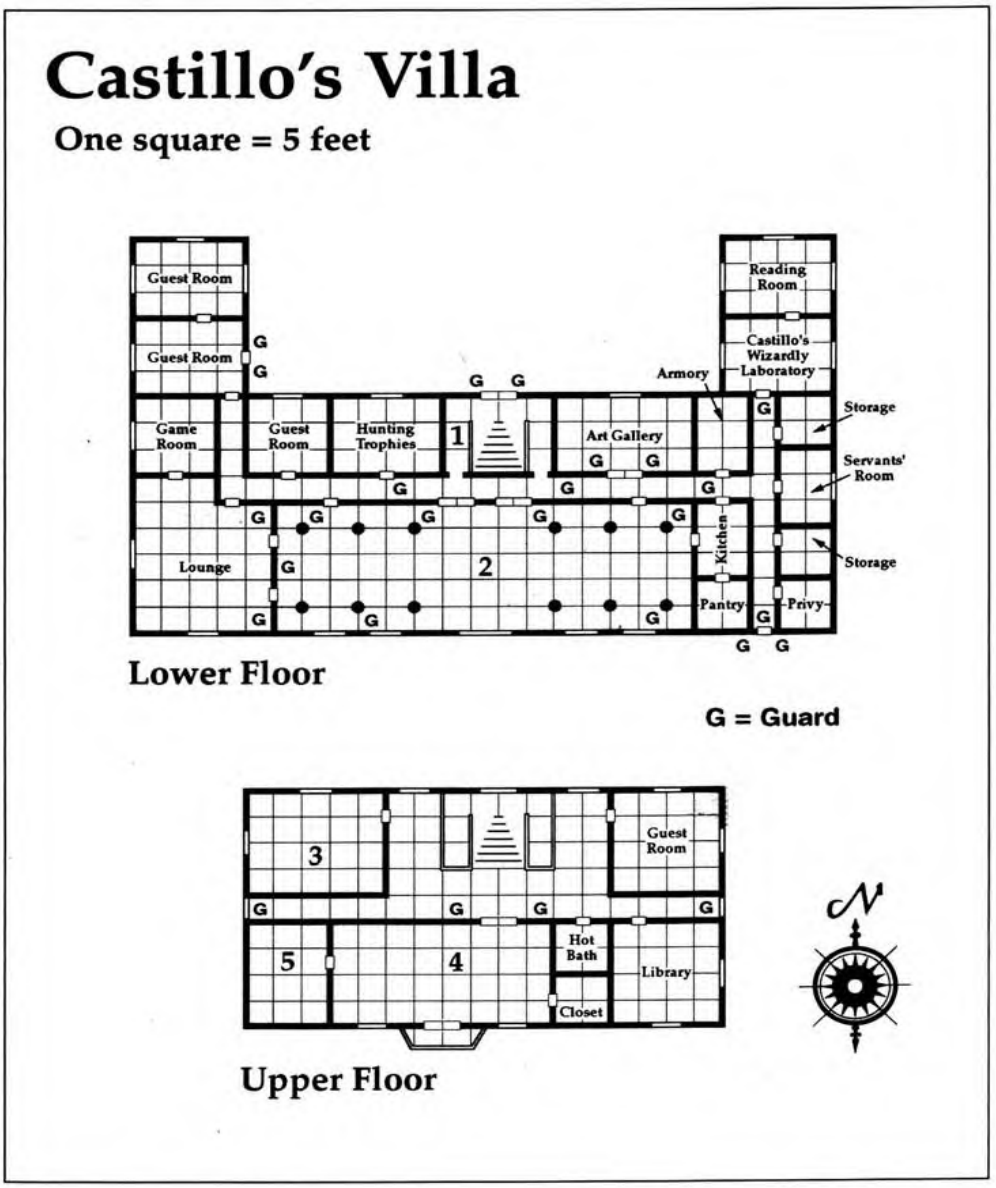
The villa is protected by the elite house guards, positioned as depicted on the map.

House guards, human males F3 (26): AC 8; MV 12; F3; hp 15 each; THAC0 18 (base); #AT 3/2 or 1; Dmg by weapon type; ML 15; AL LE; XP 120. The guards are twice specialized in the Single-weapon Style, accounting for their improved Armor Class. The guards are specialized with either the saber, rapier, or broadsword, depending on personal preference. Each guard also wears a pair of bandoleers holding an impressive array of throwing daggers and darts.

1. Grand Foyer. If the PCs arrive at the villa as party-goers, this foyer is the first they'll see of the house proper. Impress upon them the baron's power and influence, as evident in the opulence of the foyer and the rooms beyond. Finely coifed porters take coats from visitors and store them in a cloak room under the stairs. The foyer is appointed in elegant tapestries and bronze busts of important figures from Guadalante's storied past.

2. Ball Room. Filled with ribald music from the magically amplified mariachi band, this grand ball room is a sweeping tide of color and sound. Fabulously gowned ladies turn in perfect timing to the rhythm of their partners, while multi-hued globes of *continual light* cast prismatic rainbows on the polished marble floor. The room is trimmed in silver and pearl. The ceiling is supported by twelve pillars, around which grow vines of sweet-smelling ivy. Several tables offer guests a respite from the pleasant rigors of the dance floor and are laden with punch bowls, wine bottles, and platters of rich food.

At least a dozen 0-level porters and maids weave through the crowd, attending to the whims and passions of the dancers.



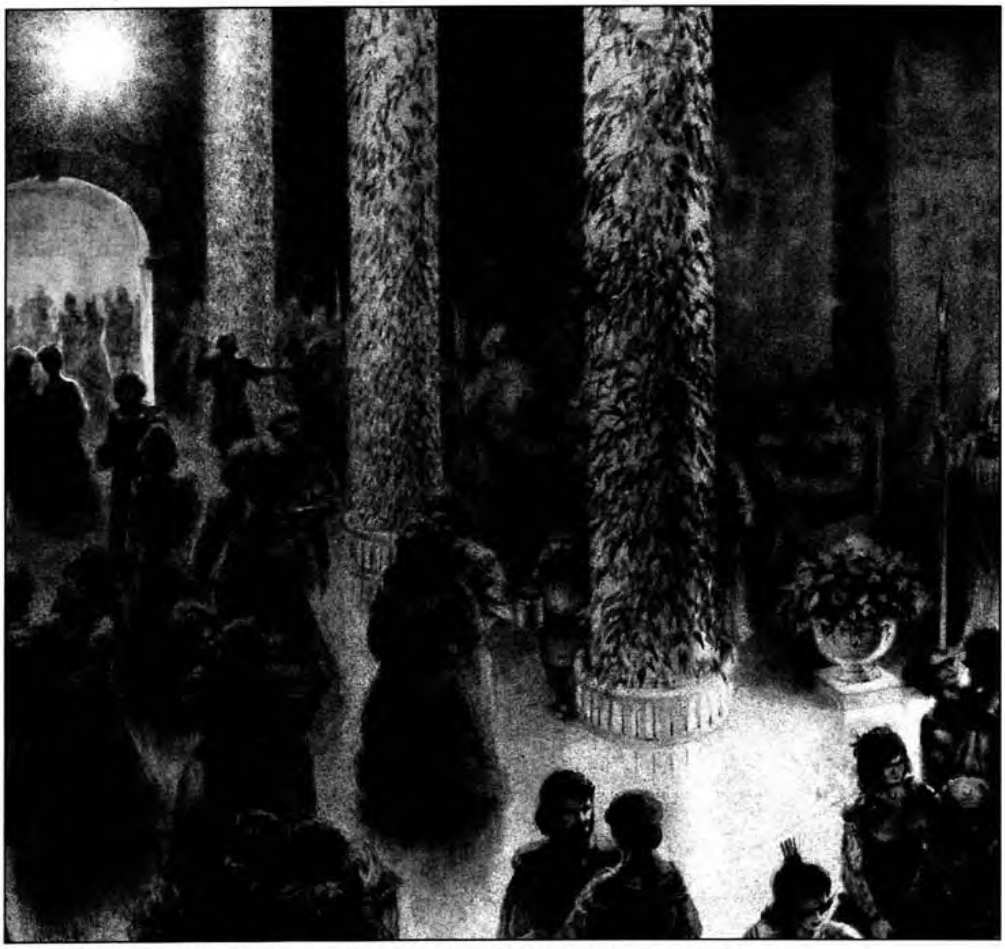
Up to one hundred guests of various races will be dancing, drinking, and flirting here at the height of the party. The DM should pull no punches as far as roleplaying is concerned, inundating the PCs with the varied personalities of the Guadalantean elite. One of the NPCs who introduces himself to the PCs is the baron's steward and confidant, the renowned swordsman Armando Montego. Armando is one of the many ambiguous NPCs who could either ally with or contend with the PCs when a move is ultimately made against the baron.

Armando Montego, human male F7: AC –2 (up to –6 with sword); MV 12; hp 50; THAC0 13; #AT 2/1; Dmg by weapon type; Str 11, Dex 16, Con 12, Int 13, Wis 10, Cha 17; ML 17; AL LN; XP 2,000.

Like the house guards, Armando has twice specialized in the Single-weapon Style of combat, which accounts for two points of his Armor Class when dueling. If the *PLAYER'S OPTION*® rules are in effect, Armando should be considered a High Master of the saber. As such, his THAC0 is 11.

Armando's combat skills and Armor Class are further improved by his special saber, the *glass sword of Navarez*. This fabulous swept-hilt saber is made entirely of glass, fashioned by a grand-master glassblower under the reign of King Navarez II several hundred years ago and enchanted with a *glassteel* spell. The *glass sword of Navarez* acts as a *defender* +4. Legend holds that the sword shatters only if its wielder loses the will to fight.

Armando also wears *bracers of defense AC 2*, in addition to his other finery, such as silver loop earrings (100 gp), a platinum-studded belt (300 gp), and his jeweled scabbard (500



Guadalante's elite gather for Baron Castillo's birthday celebration.

gp). Armando favors a flashy fighting style, often trying to disarm his opponent. A incorrigible showman, Armando takes every opportunity to impress the ladies and earn the respect or jealousy of the men. If there is a female PC present, Armando wastes no time asking her to accompany him to the ball room floor. He is a dancer of breathtaking ability.

Other potentially prominent NPCs include Sanchez, a local sage interested in interviewing adventurers on their exploits, and Señorita Lolita Ortega, a conniving young elven lass who seeks to marry into wealth and stature.

Finally, standing at the center of everyone's attention yet somehow still alone, is the baron's young wife, Anna Maria Castillo. The baroness is a black-eyed beauty who is only recently discovering the depth of her husband's deceit. There is something of the night sky in her heart, and a bit of the wind as it blows in from the sea. Anna Marie has had her own spies roving the Serobi Wastes, and at the DM's option she is aware of the PCs' presence at the ball and discretely attempts to make contact with them. Always wary of divulging too much to strangers, Anna Marie proves a formidable tactician in conversation, as she is both subtle and intelligent. There is a strong chance that she tries to recruit the PCs in her plans to expose her husband's criminal activities. If there is a particular PC who impresses her, Anna Marie pulls him or her aside and presents her terms: If the PCs help her recover proof of the baron's illicit campaigns, she will pay them each the sum of 500 gp, as well as safe passage back to their homeland. She further suggests that the PCs commence their investigation in the baron's personal suite of rooms on the upper level of the villa.

Unfortunately, the baron's private suite is heavily guarded. In fact, between Armando Montego and the contingent of house guards, the PCs will be hard-pressed to mount an effective sortie against Baron Castillo. Anna Marie can offer no offensive support, as she is a 0-level noncombatant. If the heroes are unable to penetrate the baron's rooms, the most creative answer to their problem would be seeking out Bandvong in the Serobi Wastes and forming a hasty alliance. Bandvong can either provide the PCs with a few additional men to bolster their strike force, or he can launch a full-scale assault on the villa with the bulk of his 100 soldiers. Such a melee would be a fitting climax to the PCs' search for Salamanca's gold, a portion of which Bandvong might demand as recompense.

3. Armando's Chamber. Armando Montego calls this lavish room his own. The chamber contains trophies and knickknacks gathered from all parts of Guadalante, from finely woven rugs to candlesticks carved of mahogany from the jungle to the south. In a closet full of fashionable clothes hangs a *robe of useful items* so dreadfully out of style that Armando doubts he'll ever have occasion to wear it. The upper drawer of his bureau is crammed with perfumed letters from a dozen different lovers, as well as other, more delicate expressions of their affection. Although the PCs might find several different items of interest in this room, there is really nothing here that can help them in their quest.

4. Master Bedchamber. A pair highly polished double doors stands before the bedroom that the baron shares with his wife. If the PCs are acting at the behest of Anna Marie, she can provide them with the key. Inside is a vast canopy bed, a chandelier, several graceful sculptures, a large closet, the desk at which Anna Marie sits before her mirror, and a glass door that opens upon a balcony overlooking the sea.

If the PCs aren't careful, their boots are certain to leave dirty marks on the white pile rug covering the floor. Every object in this chamber speaks of wealth and leisure. However, almost everything here belongs to Anna Marie, as she has decorated the room to her own tastes. If the PCs hopes to uncover anything concerning Don Castillo, they'll have to penetrate the door to his personal study.

5. The Baron's Study. The narrow door to this chamber presents a triple threat. Not only is it locked securely (–20% to any Open Locks attempts), it is also trapped and magically warded. The keyhole sits in a brass plate just beneath the handle on the door. The plate itself is carved in the image of a laughing human face. The plate is enchanted with a *magic mouth* spell, causing the face to clear its throat loudly a moment before anyone touches the door. If one of the characters fails to immediately stick something in the keyhole (key, lockpick, or whatever), the mouth begins singing in a loud and sonorous voice. The guards arrive moments later. Thrusting something into the keyhole prevents the *mouth* from singing, but if an attempt to open the door should then fail, or if the trap is triggered, then the *magic mouth* bursts into song. The trap can be disarmed by either inserting the proper key, which only the baron holds, or by making a successful Find/Remove Traps roll. Otherwise a dart shoots from the mouth

of a nearby statuette, striking the PC nearest the door. The highly toxic poison causes death in 1d4 rounds unless a saving throw vs. poison is successful.

The room beyond the door is a study in quiet elegance. Adorned in dark wood and leather, a matching desk and chair dominate the chamber, surrounded by bookcases that hold a few hundred volumes ranging in topic from mining to military science. If any PCs spend at least 20 minutes examining the titles, a *libram of ineffable damnation* can be found here. This is at least circumstantial evidence of the baron's malevolent disposition. The shelf in the far corner is actually a *permanent illusion* that disguises a locked strongbox. Inside the box are 1,000 gp, 2,000 gp in jewelry, and a potion of *longevity* that Castillo has been saving for later consumption. The bottom of the box is false, concealing a carefully rolled piece of brown parchment. At long last, this is Fragment 4 of Salamanca's map. In the event that Rafael Nightstar was able to secure Fragment 2 from the *Gato Rojo*, that piece of the map is also here.

The upper drawer of the desk is unlocked and contains standard writing implements, ink, and a few unfinished and unimportant letters (though the DM can stash anything here he or she fancies). The lower drawer is *wizard locked* and holds several ledgers and other sensitive documents, including the books that prove Castillo has been accepting large sums of cash from certain prominent political and business figures. Although the names mean nothing to the PCs, Anna Marie can inform them, in between oaths of anger at her husband's crimes, that some of these men are suspected criminals and others are lesser nobles known for their questionable ethics. It seems the baron has been taking bribes to keep his friends out of prison, and he has accepted kickbacks on land charters from the king to various members of the nobility.

Anna Marie acts swiftly. That night she plans to deliver the books to King Edmundo himself, while she steals away with her personal possessions to a friend's home far away on the southern coast. However, if the PCs have a better idea for how to make the most of the don's downfall, Anna Marie might be persuaded to another course of action.

Regardless of what they ultimately decide to do, the PCs are only safe so long as the baron remains ignorant of their actions. There are several ways the PCs can find themselves in direct confrontation with the baron. First of all, they might be caught while trying to penetrate his study. Or perhaps they league with Bandvong and engage the baron in combat while the house guards war with the banditos. Finally, if Anna Marie tries to have him arrested, the baron can escape and return to visit his revenge upon the PCs.

Baron Misael Castillo, human male W9: AC 5; MV 12; hp 21; THAC0 18; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type or spell; SD *stoneskin* spell; MR 5%; Str 12, Dex 10, Con 13, Int 17, Wis 13, Cha 16; ML 17; AL LE; XP 6,000.

Spells (4/3/3/2/1): 1st—*jump, magic missile* (×2), *wall of fog*; 2nd—*mirror image, web, wizard lock*; 3rd—*dispel magic, fireball* (×2); 4th—*phantasmal killer, stoneskin* (already cast); 5th—*contact other plane* (already cast).

Along with his *phantasmal killer* spell, the baron enjoys using his *deck of illusions* in combat. Castillo's sequined red vest acts as a *robe of the archmagi*, while a glass bottle at his belt holds *dust of sneezing and choking*. The baron smashes the bottle on the floor if he finds himself in extremis, then jumps to safety.

Chapter 6: Following the Map

With the map fragments in hand and the baron's allies hot on their heels, the PCs assemble the sections of Salamanca's legacy and follow it into the Serobi Wastes.

The map illustrates how to locate certain landmarks that would otherwise go unnoticed in the trackless expanse of the desert. The PCs' journey begins in Valencia, where they're again received as saviors by the locals. From there they proceed to Vulture Canyon, where they're sure to attract the attention of the outlaws and monsters that call the canyon home. Meanwhile, any remaining agents of the baron pursue them through the sand. Exactly 10 miles southeast, toward the hills in the heart of the desert, stands a dead and solitary tree. This tree is so far removed from civilization that without the directions written on the map it would be nigh impossible to find. From here the PCs continue eastward into more rugged country until they encounter a nondescript hill precisely 7 miles from the tree. Although the PCs might have trouble estimating the exact number of miles they've traveled, a knowledgeable tracker can be hired in Valencia or Puerto Mia. Useful here would be the Distance Sense nonweapon proficiency from *The Complete Ranger's Handbook*.

From the hill, the PCs proceed due south for 3 miles. At this point, the PCs can see the Asva Mountains to the south. Around them is nothing but cracked earth. Searching the area reveals a pile of stones about 3 feet high. Since Salamanca buried the treasure here a century ago, only one creature has come across this lonely place, and that is the tortured spirit of the old prospector, Francisco Vega. Murdered on the verge of realizing his dreams, Francisco's soul was unable to pass easily into the afterlife. Instead, with his lost hopes driving him mad, Francisco became a ghost. He now dwells at the bottom of the stones, whispering an eternal lamentation over his gold. He appears to the PCs as he did in life: a sad, old dwarf in prospector's clothes, his hope now replaced by an all-consuming greed.

Francisco Vega (ghost): AC 0 or 8; MV 9; HD 10; hp 60; THAC0 11; #AT 1; Dmg age 10–40 years; SA *magic jar*; SD special; SZ M; ML 20; Int high (13); AL LE; XP 7,000; *MM*/130.

Only after the dwarf's spirit is defeated can his fortune be claimed by the living. Beneath the stones lies solid earth, but 6 feet below the surface the PCs and their shovels uncover a plain wooden casket. If the coffin is dragged up and opened, the PCs find seven burlap sacks of raw gold nuggets. The largest nugget is as big as a man's fist. The total worth of the gold depends on the overall affluence of the campaign, ranging from 2,000 to 15,000 gp. Each sack weighs almost 100 pounds, as the gold has yet to be separated from the rock.

Also in the casket, wrapped in a swaddling of red velvet, is the Cup of Santiago, which flashes in the sun. Almost 2 feet tall and made of solid gold, the Cup weighs over 20 pounds and would fetch up to 5,000 gp if the right buyer was found. However, the Cup is a holy relic, and each PC who agrees to hand it over to Juan Silva should be awarded 1,000 bonus XP. At the DM's option, the Cup is a mighty force for good and has several unique abilities, as per the *Book of Artifacts*. At the very least, the Cup possesses the power to *bless* those who touch it (as the priest spell).

The PCs now have over 700 pounds of gold. Hopefully they brought along enough pack animals to carry it. Just getting the plunder past the Serobi bandits and safely back to civilization could be an adventure unto itself!

When the Dust Finally Settles

The opportunities for continued adventures in Guadalante are almost without number. Anyone the PCs met at the baron's ball can call upon them in the future. If Castillo is still alive, his desire for retribution grows with every passing day. Even the Cup of Santiago could lead to high adventure. If the PCs choose to remain in Guadalante, the DM should detail the remainder of the kingdom, keeping in mind the many friends and enemies the PCs have made during their pursuit of a dead man's fortune. Perhaps even Salamanca himself one day returns from the grave to reclaim that which he lost … Ω

Salamanca's Treasure Map

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A gnome's scornful tune heralds dark times for Cormyr.

THE FROTHING MISCREANT

BY ROBERT A. VAN BUSKIRK

Get Shorty

Artwork by Jim Crabtree
Diagrams & Cartography by Diesel

Robert writes: "I started submitting adventures when my wife, Bina, nagged me about the time I spend gaming. Rather than goofing off with other ne'er-do-wells, I claim I'm staying professionally current as a writer. I wonder what heights she'll inspire me to after reading this!"

"The Frothing Miscreant" is an AD&D® adventure for 4–6 characters of levels 2–4 (about 16 total levels). The party should include at least one priest able to turn undead. While the adventure is set in the FORGOTTEN REALMS® campaign setting, it adapts to other settings with little difficulty.

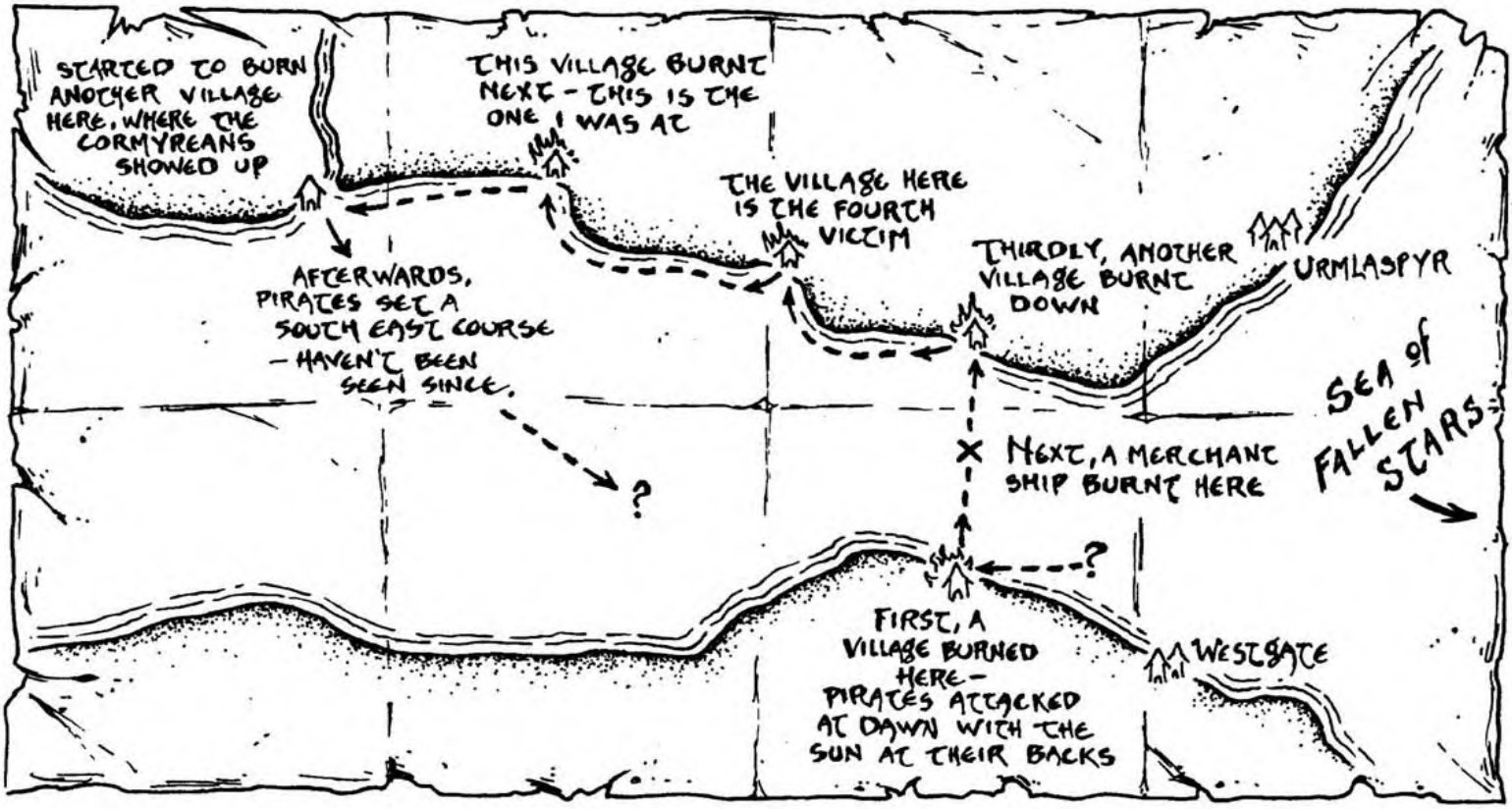
Adventure Background

A gnomish rogue named Skoradin Thinskin began his career as an adventurer. At the onset of his rise to power, he was a devout follower of Gond and demonstrated a rare genius for invention and innovation. He acquitted himself brilliantly, yet to the general public, he was a mere sidekick for the true heroes. Skoradin resented this, and the resentment blossomed into a hatred for humans and elves. He saw how easily they wore their glory while his own achievements were overlooked. When his adventuring party was feted for their heroism by the Fishermen and Merchants' Collective of Dragonmere (an insurance company), the doormen didn't believe he was a guest of honor and scornfully denied him entry to the banquet hall. This humiliation represented a significant emotional event for Skoradin and caused him to change his life forever.

Skoradin rejected traditional gnomish values as too easily scorned by other races. Instead, he embraced the worship of the evil god of destruction, Talos. Skoradin learned new skills as a priest of Talos and combined those skills with his aptitude for invention. The mixture of destructive priestcraft and technology proved effective, and Skoradin's endeavors were fruitful.

After years of preparation, Skoradin set forth in his ship, a paddleboat called *The Frothing Miscreant*. The chief weapons in his armory are called the Firebirds of Talos. The firebirds are *animated* skeletons of large but ordinary birds, covered with silk, feathers, and laminated parchment, allowing their wings to catch the air so they can fly and incidentally concealing their skeletal nature. A flask of oil is placed in each bird's torso, and a *fire trap* spell is cast on each bird's beak. The birds are ordered to dive toward a target and open their mouths, triggering the *fire trap* spell and igniting the oil.

The Frothing Miscreant set forth, and its ravages attracted the attention of Cormyr's navy. Every shred of rigging was burned from four Cormyrean vessels, and many crew members


STARTED TO BURN ANOTHER VILLAGE HERE, WHERE THE CORMYREANS SHOWED UP
THIS VILLAGE BURNT NEXT - THIS IS THE ONE I WAS AT
THE VILLAGE HERE IS THE FOURTH VICTIM
THIRDLY, ANOTHER VILLAGE BURNT DOWN
URMLASPYR
AFTERWARDS, PIRATES SET A SOUTH EAST COURSE - HAVEN'T BEEN SEEN SINCE.
?
NEXT, A MERCHANT SHIP BURNT HERE
SEA of FALLEN STARS
?
FIRST, A VILLAGE BURNED HERE - PIRATES ATTACKED AT DAWN WITH THE SUN AT THEIR BACKS
WESTGATE

leapt into the sea to escape the barrage of explosions. The warships were unable to pursue *The Frothing Miscreant*, and it churned away, taunting the singed Cormyreans with a mocking tune from its pipe organ.

With nearly all his firebirds expended in the battle, Skoradin retired to his estate near Westgate to rebuild his arsenal. Meanwhile, the humiliated and outraged Cormyreans posted a reward for the destruction of *The Frothing Miscreant* and her crew.

The reward captured the attention of a humble fisherman named Figby Aliwog. Figby survived *The Frothing Miscreant*'s attack on a coastal village and found a rare, intact firebird. Figby had heard stories about necromancers and deduced the general nature of the firebirds. Tempted by the reward, Figby kept the information to himself.

Beginning the Adventure

The PCs are approached by a middle-aged man who introduces himself as Figby Aliwog, master of a 30' fishing vessel called *Persistence*.

Figby believes *The Frothing Miscreant*'s tactics can be countered by a cleric who can turn undead. He knows that the best way to obtain help is to find some adventurers to assist him in return for a share of the reward. The following encounter should occur in a coastal town or city:

> You are approached by a man named Figby Aliwog, master of a 30' fishing vessel called *Persistence*. Figby is refreshingly direct.
>
> "You've heard of *The Frothing Miscreant*? The pirate ship that burned four of Cormyr's warships? The king has set a 3,000-gp bounty on her. I know a secret that'll let somebody defeat the pirates easily, and I'm willing to sell that secret. All I ask in exchange is an equal share of the reward. Frankly, I could use the money. I won't say any more until we've agreed to be partners. After all, I can't give away my secrets for free!"

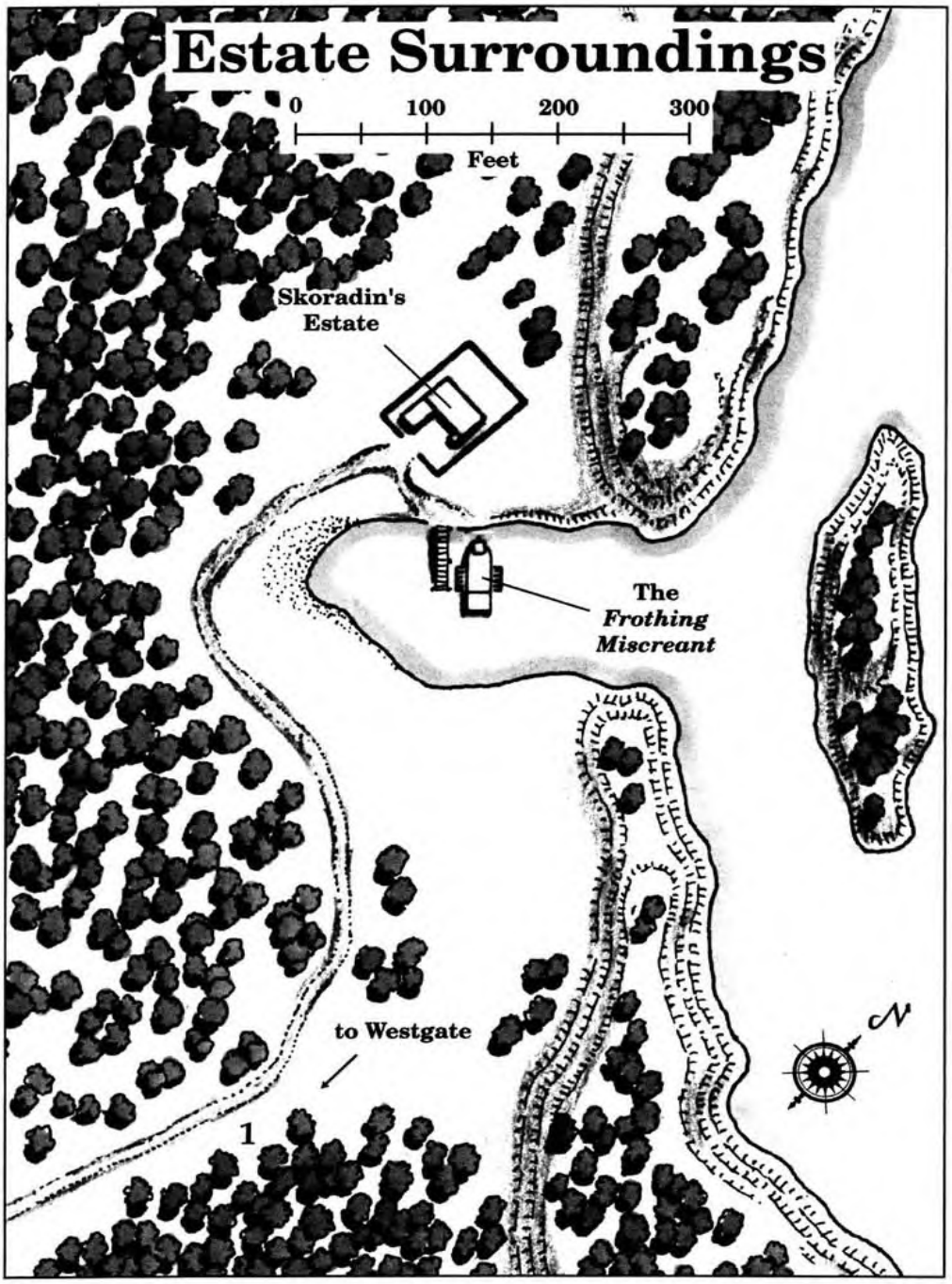
If the PCs agree to help, Figby has them sign a contract agreeing to the terms of the deal. PCs who successfully *charm* Figby can persuade him to yield his information "out of the kindness of his heart," although he feels betrayed once the *charm* wears off.

Once the contract is signed, Figby shows PCs the firebird he found and relates his tale:

> Figby shows you a curious object resembling a bird. When Figby spreads its wings, you can see that it is made from laminated paper stretched over a framework, with some bedraggled feathers pasted in place for the tail. The object is obviously the work of a skilled craftsman.

> Figby goes on to explain. "I was attending my business in a village west of Urmlaspyr when *The Frothing Miscreant* attacked. She got in close without being seen because she doesn't have masts or sails like a normal ship ... just two big wheels mounted on either side of her hull, moving her as she wills with no regard for the wind. She sent wave after wave of these birds into the village. When the birds got close enough to ships, buildings, or fighting men, they opened their beaks and exploded into balls of fire!
>
> "I was standing near a well when one of the birds came at me. I jumped down the well, and the bugger flew in after me! Even under water, I felt the heat of the explosion, and when I came up to breathe, I saw the bird floating next to me and snatched it. I brought it with me when I crawled out of the well."
>
> "Those pirates are a tricky lot. Necromancers have taken the bones of dead birds and gauded 'em up like festival lanterns. The skeletons are loaded with naphtha and enchanted so they explode. But I've heard something of necromancy, and I know a good priest can turn a skeleton with a holy symbol."

Looking more closely, the PCs can see that the object's "framework" is an actual bird



skeleton covered with paper. Within its ribcage is a cracked ceramic flask, drained but still smelling faintly of lamp oil.

Good Hunting

Further conversation with Figby reveals he doesn't know where *The Frothing Miscreant* is, but he does have a 30' fishing vessel that he can use for the search. Aside from the ship and the adventure hook, Figby provides DMs with a mouthpiece to prompt players with suggestions to speed up play.

Figby Aliwog, 0-level human male: AC 10; MV 6; hp 4; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; Str 12, Dex 12, Con 12, Int 11, Wis 12, Cha 12; ML 11; AL NG. An aging sailor, Figby forgoes armor and just as willingly forgoes combat. He carries a cutlass and a dagger, and he keeps a heavy crossbow aboard *Persistence*.

The DM should keep Figby's "convenient suggestions" in reserve and give the players the opportunity to exercise their detective skills first. A few possible leads for finding *The Frothing Miscreant* are provided below:

☛ If the PCs ask about *The Frothing Miscreant*'s activities before it encountered the Cormyrean warships, Figby draws a map. (Shown players the map on page 31.) The PCs can trace a path of destruction and reason that *The Frothing Miscreant* began its voyage near Westgate.

☛ The ceramic flask in the ribcage of Figby's captured firebird is stamped with a trade guild's mark. PCs making successful Heraldry or Appraising proficiency checks can determine that the flask was made by a potter's guild in Westgate. By journeying to Westgate and questioning the potters, the PCs learn that many of these flasks were purchased by a gnome named Skoradin Thinskin "right here in Westgate."

☛ *The Frothing Miscreant* is an unusual vessel. Keeping such a wonder secret is difficult, and if the PCs offer a few bribes (at least 50 gp) among Westgate's small population of shipbuilders, they locate several workers who helped construct the vessel at a secluded cove 5 miles east of town. These workers dealt with a gnome named Skoradin Thinskin; he wore elevator shoes and injured a man for calling him "shorty."

☛ Skoradin uses bird skeletons, paper, glue, and lamp oil to build his firebirds, and these materials can be used to trace him. PCs asking questions about anybody buying such materials in Westgate hear of a gnome named Skoradin Thinskin, who has recently resumed purchasing these materials. PCs who think to question some of Westgate's shadier denizens can also discover that Skoradin purchases human and demihuman skeletons from grave robbers. All deliveries are made to his estate near the ocean, 5 miles east of town.

Skoradin's Estate

Skoradin's estate is hidden from the view of passing ships by steep cliffs and a small, rocky island. Jagged rocks present the image of an inhospitable coast with no place to make safe landfall. The terrain is rugged and overgrown with brush and trees. A dirt road leads from Westgate, but it is seldom traveled except by Skoradin and merchants or craftsmen delivering goods or providing services.

PCs who ask these merchants or craftsmen about Skoradin's whereabouts receive a general description of the estate. It should be noted that Skoradin has never allowed guests inside his estate, and since the completion of *The Frothing Miscreant* no visitors are allowed within 200 feet of the estate.

1. Sentry Point. PCs who approach Skoradin's estate during the day via the dirt road leading from Westgate are sighted a mile away by a pair of halfling sentries posted on a low hill overlooking the road. (The seaward approach

to the estate is watched by Fizer Agate, at area **20**.) If they spot travelers approaching the estate, the halflings use mirrors to signal the estate by reflecting sunlight at the guards in area **14**.

Rangen Whisperfoot, halfling male T3: AC 6; MV 6; hp 13; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; SD +3 bonus to saving throws vs. magic or poison; Str 12, Dex 16, Con 13, Int 11, Wis 10, Cha 13; ML 14; AL NE; XP 270; thief abilities: PP 50%, OL 30%, FRT 10%, MS 65%, HS 35%, DN 35%, CW 45%, RL –5%;. leather armor, shortbow, short sword, knife, pouch holding 25 gp.

Rangen coats his weapons with a poison that causes unconsciousness in 1–6 rounds unless a saving throw vs. poison (with a +2 bonus) is made. The poison must be reapplied after one successful strike. Rangen shares Skoradin's bigotry against elves and humans and was easily recruited as the gnome's henchman.

Melwort Trailwalker, halfling male T3: AC 6; MV 6; hp 12; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; SD +3 bonus to saving throws vs. magic or poison; Str 13, Dex 15, Con 12, Int 7, Wis 7, Cha 10; ML 12; AL NG; XP 120; thief abilities: PP 20%, OL 60%, FRT 10%, MS 65%, HS 20%, DN 35%, CW 60%, RL –5%; studded leather armor, short sword, knife, sling and 20 bullets.

Melwort is actually a nice guy, but he's loyal to his friends and too naive to see that some of them are wicked and depraved.

If the halflings succeed in warning the estate, the gnomish heavy cavalry riders from area **5** are sent to intercept the intruders, arriving in 1d4+7 rounds.

If the intruders include elves and humans who cannot convince the gnomes they have arrived to sell bird skeletons or Greek fire, the gnomish heavy cavalry attacks immediately. Skoradin watches from area **14**, and Fizer Agate watches from the deck of *The Frothing Miscreant* (area **20**). Both clerics assist the gnomish heavy cavalry by sending waves of firebirds to destroy the intruders. Fizer sends up to 32 firebirds in waves of four firebirds per round. Skoradin sends up to 48 firebirds in waves of eight firebirds per round.

If the PC party includes only halflings, gnomes, and dwarves, the gnomish cavalry approaches the PCs but does not attack them immediately. Such a party might convince the gnomes they have come to join Skoradin, or they could succeed with some other ruse enabling them to gain entrance to the estate. For instance, "stout" PCs can convince the gnomish cavalry that they're in the region to prospect or collect ore samples and simply want shelter for the night.

2. Wall. The 2'-thick, 10'-high wall surrounding the estate is made of mortared stone. The top of the wall is covered with nails and pieces of broken glass. These have been embedded into the mortar to deter intruders, and any PC attempting to scale the wall must make a successful Dexterity check or suffer 1d4 points of damage. The ground within 10 feet of the wall (on both sides) is covered with a thick layer of gravel that makes crunching sounds when trod upon, imposing a –50% penalty to Move Silently checks.

3. Main Gate. This portal is made of ornate, wrought iron bars fashioned in the likeness of climbing ivy vines. The gate poses no obstacle to sight or cover from missile fire, but it is very strong, and the "ivy" leaves and vines have been filed to razor edges so any creature attempting to climb the gate suffers 1d4+1 points of damage. The gate is also guarded by two inflatable decoy sentries and a fake inflatable decoy dummy-blind. (See the "Gnomish Inventions" section at the end of the adventure.) At night, the fake inflatable decoy dummy-blind is manned by a gnome sentry. The entire area is subject to surveillance from areas **9** and **14**.

Rock gnome sentry: AC 4; MV 6; HD 1; hp 5; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon; SD +3 bonus to saving throws vs. magic; SZ S (3' tall); ML 13; Int average (10); AL NE; XP 65; *MM*/159. The sentry sits on a stool inside the fake inflatable decoy dummy-blind. He wears banded mail, holds a flame thrower in his lap, and carries a short sword, dagger, and a pouch containing 10 gp on his belt. A beartrap paddle lays on the ground beneath his stool where he can snatch it up after firing his flame thrower. The flame thrower and beartrap paddle are fully described in the "Gnomish Inventions" section at the end of the module.

4. Outhouse. The outhouse is a moveable structure, and circles of loose dirt in various spots around the yard prove that Skoradin has the outhouse moved on a regular basis as each cesspit becomes too odorous. Enterprising PCs seeking to use the outhouse for cover or as a site for an ambush discover that the cesspit currently covered by the outhouse is 6 feet deep, half full, and quite odorous.

5. Stablehouse. This two-story building is made of stone, with a roof of thick wooden beams covered by shingles made of baked clay. Double doors lead into the yard. Directly above them is a second set of doors leading to the loft. Above the loft doors is a thick wooden beam equipped with a pulley. The building's windows are equipped with shutters. The stablehouse contains three stalls (areas **5A**, **5B**, and **5C** respectively).

The stables house Skoradin's elite force of gnomish heavy cavalry (further described in the "Gnomish Inventions" section at the end of the adventure). In addition to a heavy warhorse, each stall contains a ladder. A system of ropes and pulleys mounted on the ceiling allow Skoradin and his followers to put on and take off the tack, barding, and armored chests necessary for gnomish heavy cavalry. The loft (area **5D**) is used to store fodder and as a barracks for the three gnomish fighters who ride the horses and the three gnomish craftsmen who maintain the equipment. Fighters, craftsmen, and horses are described below. Equipment items such as beartrap paddles, *fire trap* lances, and flame throwers are described in the "Gnomish Inventions"section at the end of the adventure.

Addefen, gnome male F4: AC 3; MV 6; hp 40; THAC0 17 (base); #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; SD +5 bonus to saving throws vs. magic; Str 15, Dex 12, Con 18, Int 12, Wis 10, Cha 15; ML 16; AL CN; XP 270.

An old friend of Skoradin's, Addefen is wild and amoral. He wears platemail and carries a *short sword +1* on his hip. A beartrap paddle rides in a scabbard on his back, and in battle he holds a *fire trap* lance in each hand. He wears assorted jewelry worth 100 gp.

Kaervan, gnome male F3: AC 4; MV 6; hp 24; THAC0 18 (base); #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type +1 (Strength bonus); SD +4 bonus to saving throws vs. magic; Str 17, Dex 14, Con 16, Int 10, Wis 13, Cha 11; ML 15; AL CN; XP 175.

Kaervan was introduced to Skoradin by their mutual friend, Addefen. Kaervan likes to burn things. He wears banded mail and carries a short sword on his belt and a *fire trap* lance in his hands. He also has a flame thrower slung over his back. His belt pouch contains 10 pp.

Urandal, gnome male F3: AC 4; MV 6; hp 24; THAC0 18 (base); #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type +1; SD +4 bonus to saving throws vs. magic; Str 16, Dex 13, Con 14, Int 9, Wis 12, Cha 9; ML 16; AL CN; XP 175.

Urandal is destructive and battle-crazed. He wears banded mail and criss-crossed bandoliers holding 12 darts. He wields a *warhammer +1*, a dagger, and a *fire trap* lance. He wears a money belt containing 25 gp.

Rock gnome craftsmen (3): AC 10; MV 6; HD 1; hp 5, 4, 3; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; SD +3 to saving throws vs. magic; ML 7; SZ S (3' tall); Int average (10); AL NG; XP 15; *MM*/159. These gnomes are skilled craftsmen and provide Skoradin with valuable assistance, but they do not approve of his evil ways and plan to desert. If threatened with violence, they surrender quickly and cooperate with interrogators. Each carries a pouch with 20 gp and an assortment of odd tools.

Heavy warhorses (3): AC 7 (2 with platemail barding); MV 15 (12 with platemail barding); HD 3+3; hp 22, 21, 18; THAC0 17; #AT 3; Dmg 1–8/1–8/1–4; SZ L; ML 7; Int animal (1); AL N; XP 120; *MM*/194.

During the day, the warhorses are kept in full harness, including platemail barding, ready to respond at a moment's notice to any emergency. At night, the horses are unharnessed and rubbed down.

6. Wood Pile. The stacked wood reaches to within 4 feet of the top of the wall. Skoradin's four wardogs are usually found here waiting for kitchen scraps. They attack interlopers or when so commanded by Skoradin.

War dogs (4): AC 6; MV 12; HD 2+2; hp 13, 12, 10, 9; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg 2–8; SZ M; ML 10; Int semi (4); AL N; XP 65; *MM*/57.

7. Guarded Well. The door is secured at night with a heavy wooden bar and a sliding iron bolt. Standing next to the east wall are two animated human skeletons that attack anybody taller than 4 feet.

This chamber houses a well and is also used to store food. The well is surrounded by a 2'-high wall and is equipped with a turnstile for lowering a bucket to the water 15 feet below. The bottom of the well is only 5 feet below the surface of the water.

The food items stored here include bags of flour, sacks of onions and potatoes, jars of nuts, a couple small kegs of beer, and an assortment of herbs and spices.

Skeletons (2): AC 7; MV 12; HD 1; hp 5 each; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg 1–6; SD edged and piercing weapons inflict half damage; immune to mind-affecting spells; SZ M; ML special; Int non (0); AL N; XP 65; *MM*/315.

8. Kitchen. This room contains an assortment of cooking, serving, and eating utensils. Cabinets and barrels contain dry foodstuffs. The fireplace is equipped with a revolving spit. Light is provided by a lantern hanging from the ceiling. The window is equipped with shutters, which are secured at night with sliding iron bolts.

9. Living Room. This room is deliberately kept dark. The windows are equipped with heavy curtains and thick shutters that can be secured with sliding iron bolts. The doors leading outside are stout and sturdy and can be secured with sliding iron bolts and heavy wooden bars. The chamber is furnished with thick rugs, two over-stuffed chairs, an over-stuffed couch, and a wooden rocking chair.

Two gnomish sentries stand guard here at night. Both are concealed from the view of anybody outside by the curtains over the windows. One sentry watches the front yard, and one watches the back yard.

Rock gnome sentries (2): AC 4; MV 6; HD 1; hp 5 each; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; SD +3 bonus to saving throws vs. magic; SZ S (3' tall); ML 13; Int average (10); AL NE; XP 120; *MM*/159.

The gnomes wear banded mail and carry short swords and daggers on their belts. Each holds a flame-thrower that can be fired through the windows at opponents outside the house. Against the walls near each sentry's position is a *fire trap* lance and a beartrap paddle that can be used against intruders who force their way inside. Each gnome has a belt pouch containing 1–10 gp.

10. Halfling Quarters. This room quarters the halfling sentries from area **1**, and they are often here at night. The door is equipped with a lock and can also be secured from inside with a heavy wooden bar and a sliding iron bolt. The window is equipped with shutters secured with sliding iron bolts. The room contains a pair of small beds, a lantern, and two small chests. Each chest contains clothing for one of the halflings.

11. Gnome Quarters. This room is used to house seven gnome mercenaries. Except for having seven beds and seven chests, the room is essentially identical to area **10**. No more than three gnomes are found here sleeping at any one time; the others are on duty in areas **3**, **9**, and **14**.

Rock gnomes (3): AC 4; MV 6; HD 1; hp 5 each; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon; SD +3 bonus to saving throws vs. magic; SZ S (3' tall); ML 13; Int average (10); AL NE; XP 65; *MM*/159.

The gnomes wear banded mail and carry short swords and daggers on their belts. Each holds a flame thrower that can be fired through the windows at opponents outside the house. Against the walls near each sentry's position is a *fire trap* lance and a beartrap paddle. Each gnome has a belt pouch containing 1–10 gp.

12. Ant Farm. A faint charnel odor emanates from this spacious closet. Within the closet is a glass aquarium 5 feet wide, 8 feet long, and 2 feet deep. It is half filled with dirt, lying atop which are six dead seagulls. A cursory examination reveals the aquarium is an ant farm, and its glass walls contain a large colony of fire ants. Skoradin uses the insects to clean the last bits of flesh from the bird carcasses before salvaging the bones to make firebirds.

13. Secret Room. This secret room consists of two compartments. The outer compartment was meant to be found or revealed to robbers, with the intention of duping them into thinking they had located all the estate's hidden treasure. A chest in the outer compartment contains 1,000 coins to sate a robber's greed. These coins are made of lead and coated with gold paint. PCs have a base 10% chance of detecting the sham. This base chance should increase as the coins are handled and the paint chips away to reveal the lead, possibly with embarrassing consequences for the PCs. Any PC who makes a successful Appraising proficiency check realizes the coins' true nature immediately.

An inner chamber (labeled **13A** on the map) contains the real treasure. Here, a second chest holds Skoradin's fortune: a measly 500 gp. Skoradin spent most of his ill-gotten wealth buying and modifying *The Frothing Miscreant*. He had hoped to rebuild his fortune during his rampages but was having so much fun smashing and burning things that he never engaged in any serious pillaging.

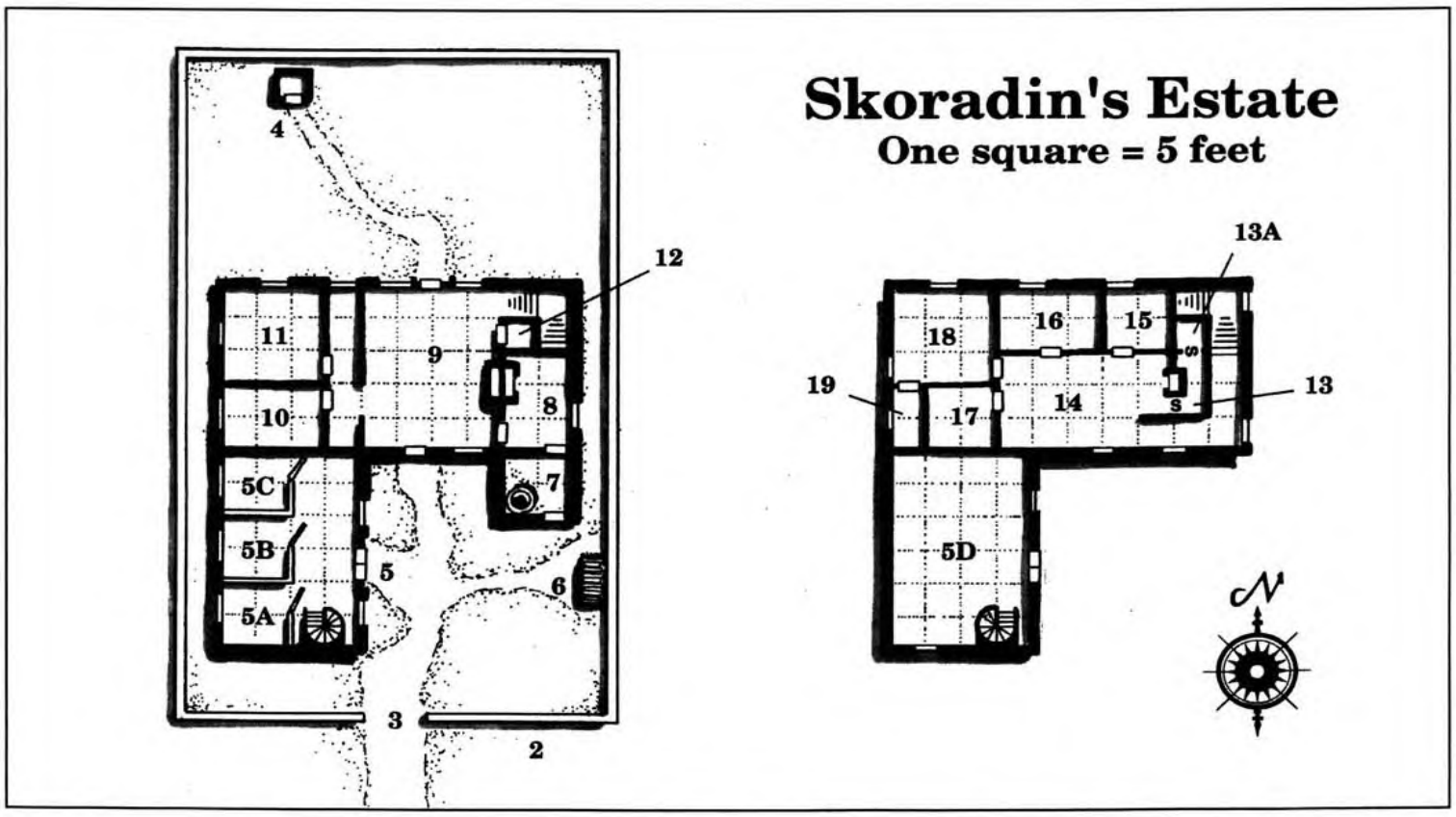
14. Skoradin's Air Force. This room is central to the defense of Skoradin's estate. The windows are equipped with heavy drapes and curtains, concealing two gnome sentries who stand guard here. During the day, one of the sentries vigilantly watches for mirror flashes from the halfling sentries at area **1**. The room also contains six portable clothes racks, each used as a perch for eight firebirds. Once Skoradin is notified of an attack, he dispatches eight firebirds per round to attack any opponents visible from the estate's second floor windows.

Rock gnomes (2): AC 4; MV 6; HD 1; hp 5 each; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon; SD +3 bonus to saving throws vs. magic; SZ S (3' tall); ML 13; Int average (10); AL NE; XP 65; *MM*/159.

The gnomes wear banded mail and carry short swords and daggers on their belts. Each holds a flame thrower that can be fired through the windows at opponents outside the house. Against the walls near each sentry's position is a *fire trap* lance and a beartrap paddle. Each gnome has 1–10 gp in a belt pouch.

Firebirds (48 animal skeletons): AC 8; MV 6, fly 15 (C); HD 1–1; hp 3 each; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg special; SA *fire trap* spell causes 1d4+8 points of damage; SD immune to *sleep*, *charm*, *hold* and *fear*; SZ S; ML special; Int non (0); AL N; XP 120; *MM*/315 (variant).

15. Skoradin's Library. The window in this room is equipped with iron bars and heavy shutters secured with sliding iron bolts. The room is illuminated with a *continual light* spell. A gnome-sized, over-stuffed easy chair sits against the north wall. A bookshelf holding dozens of thick, leather-bound books occupies the south wall. Most of the books are gnomish or dwarvish texts on such topics as mining, stonework, smithing, engineering, carpentry, herbalism, brewing, and metallurgy. A few books written in Elven or Common relate to shipbuilding, navigation, geography, and other maritime pursuits. Other titles indicate Skoradin has held at least passing interests in subjects such as heraldry, astronomy, philosophy, kite-making, and bird watching.



Two of the books are of special interest. One book titled *Basic Hand Motions Used In Somatic Components* has a hollowed-out back cover containing a scroll inscribed with the *stoneskin* spell. Another book, shoved behind several others and forgotten for years, is a spellbook containing the spells *detect magic, identify, magic missile, read magic, detect invisibility, glitterdust,* and *strength.*

16. Shrine. This room has been converted into a shrine to Talos. The walls are covered with velvet tapestries depicting scenes of great storms and cataclysmic destruction. A wooden altar is surmounted by a 1'-high silver statue of powerfully built, humanoid figure with an eye-patch (worth 10 gp). Atop the altar rests Skoradin's diary. The diary contains the boastful confessions of Skoradin's crimes and heinous intentions, for the gnome views the diary as an offering of evil deeds, and the book's placement on the altar is symbolic of this view.

The diary connects Skoradin and his demihuman associates to several atrocities. PCs who present the diary to the Cormyrean authorities receive an additional reward of 300 gp for capturing or killing Skoradin, 75 gp for Rangen Whisperfoot, 50 gp for Melwort, 150 gp each for Addefen and Fizer Agate, and 100 gp each for Kaervan and Urandal.

17. Skoradin's Bedroom. The room is sparsely furnished with a cot, a nightstand, a foot locker, and peg from which Skoradin hangs his hat and cloak. Light is provided by a candle on the nightstand. In one corner is an *animated* squirrel skeleton on a small platform with an hourglass. The hourglass is connected to a rod, which is in turn connected to a clock. Every time the hourglass empties, the squirrel turns the hourglass, causing the rod to spin and, through a system of gears, turn the hands on the clockface. The hourglass-clock is worth 90 gp intact.

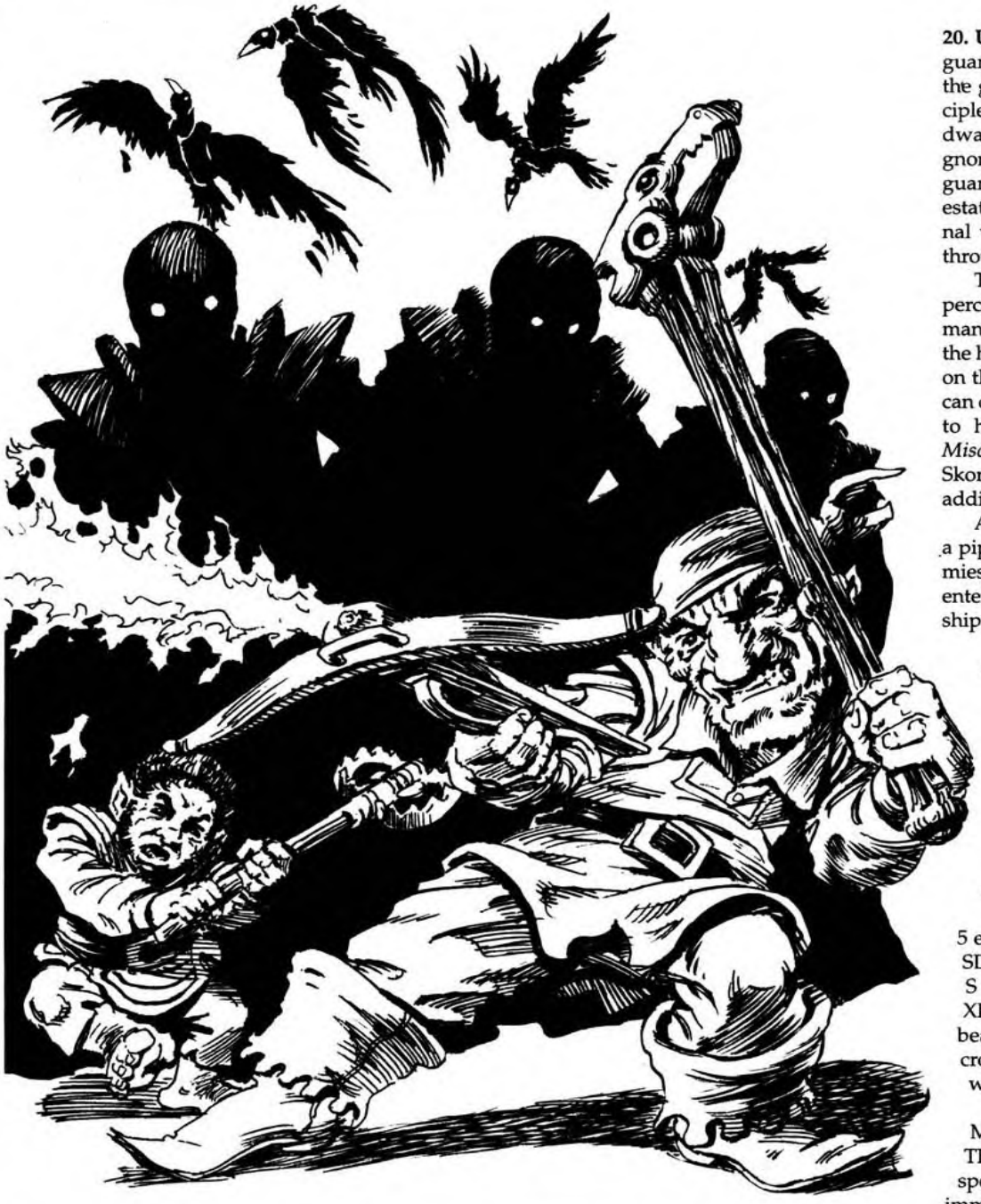
18. Skoradin's Workshop. The windows are equipped with iron bars and heavy shutters secured with sliding iron bolts. The walls are lined with benches and cabinets, and the center of the room is occupied by a low desk. The surfaces of the room are littered with 200 unanimated, partially completed firebirds, along with the paper, glue, feathers, lamp oil, clay pots, and wax used in the construction of each firebird. Skoradin Thinskin is usually found here.

Skoradin Thinskin, gnome male C8/T9: AC 10; MV 6; hp 40; THAC0 16; #AT 1; Dmg 1d6+3 (*footman's mace* +2); SD +4 bonus to saving throws vs. magic; Str 12, Dex 14, Con 15, Int 13, Wis 18, Cha 13; ML 17; AL CE; XP 5,000; thief abilities: PP 15%, OL 85%, FRT 55%, MS 45%, HS 10%, DN 25%, CW 45%, RL 95%; leather armor, *footman's mace* +2, assorted jewelry worth 100 gp, scroll with the spells *magic missile, mirror image,* and *stinking cloud.*

Spells (5/5/4/2): 1st—*bless, cure light wounds* (×2), *faerie fire, sanctuary;* 2nd—*aid, fire trap* (×3), *heat metal;* 3rd—*animate dead, prayer, summon insects, water breathing;* 4th—*cure serious wounds, produce fire.*

Skoradin wears elevator shoes with 12" soles. The soles are hollow, and each contains ten animated mouse skeletons. A caltrop is strapped to each mouse skeleton's spine. On Skoradin's command, the mice burst forth from secret doors in the sides of the shoes and throw themselves under the feet of whomever Skoradin indicates. The "mouse-trops" are automatically turned by clerics, and they are easily outrun (MV 3), but any creature engaging Skoradin in melee suffers 1d6 points of damage per round as the "mouse-trops" skitter underfoot. PCs wearing heavy boots suffer half damage from the "mouse-trops."

19. Junk Closet. Skoradin likes to keep things around on the off chance they might come in handy someday. The closet is packed from floor to ceiling with leftovers from previous experiments and half-assembled inventions. There are oddly shaped pieces of metal, coiled springs, wires, glass tubes, equipment for a forge, schematics for a flush toilet, parts of a wyvern skeleton, a still, two hundred sheets



of parchment, a set of writing quills, and several vials of ink.

The Frothing Miscreant

The Frothing Miscreant was originally a caravel. Under Skoradin's supervision, the ship's masts were removed, and the water wheels from an old mill were attached to either side of the ship to create paddle wheels. The paddle wheels are attached to opposite ends of a single axle. A system of cogs and chains transmit power to the axle from a pair of capstans located below deck. Each capstan is driven by 24 animated skeletons who push the bars of the capstans swiftly and tirelessly. For purposes of naval adventures, treat *The Frothing Miscreant* as a caravel as described in *Of Ships and the Sea*, but with MV 10, a Seaworthiness score of 15, and a Maneuverability score of 10. *The Frothing Miscreant* is not subject to wind direction, and its tireless undead crew can move the ship 30 miles per day by paddling through the night. *The Frothing Miscreant*'s speed is dependent on the 48 animated skeletons turning the capstans in the hold, and the ship's speed is reduced in direct proportion to the number of skeletons lost. (Thus, if the ship loses 24 skeletons, speed is reduced to 50%.)

20. Upper Decks. During the day, the deck is guarded by four gnome mercenaries. At night, the guards are joined by Skoradin's only disciple in the worship of Talos: a renegade dwarf named Fizer Agate. Fizer and the gnomes under his command are charged with guarding the seaward approach to Skoradin's estate, and they alert the estate with their signal whistles if intruders sail into the harbor through the gap in the sea cliffs.

Two clothes racks on the sterncastle act as perches for eight firebirds each. Fizer can command these firebirds to attack ships entering the harbor or intruders approaching the estate on the road from Westgate. If necessary, Fizer can command the undead in the hold (area **24**) to help repel boarders, and *The Frothing Miscreant* is positioned in the harbor so Skoradin can assist the vessel by sending additional firebirds from area **14**.

Also on deck, protected by several tarps, is a pipe organ. Skoradin uses it to awe his enemies with dramatic, fear-inspiring music as he enters battle, or, as with the Cormyrean warships, to mock them while he escapes.

Fizer Agate, dwarf male C4: AC 2; MV 6; hp 20; THAC0 18; #AT 1; Dmg 2d4+1 (*morning star +1*); SD +4 bonus to saving throws vs. magic or poison; Str 15, Dex 12, Con 14, Int 11, Wis 16, Cha 10; ML 19; AL CE; XP 270; platemail, shield, *morning star +1*, and assorted jewelry worth 200 gp.

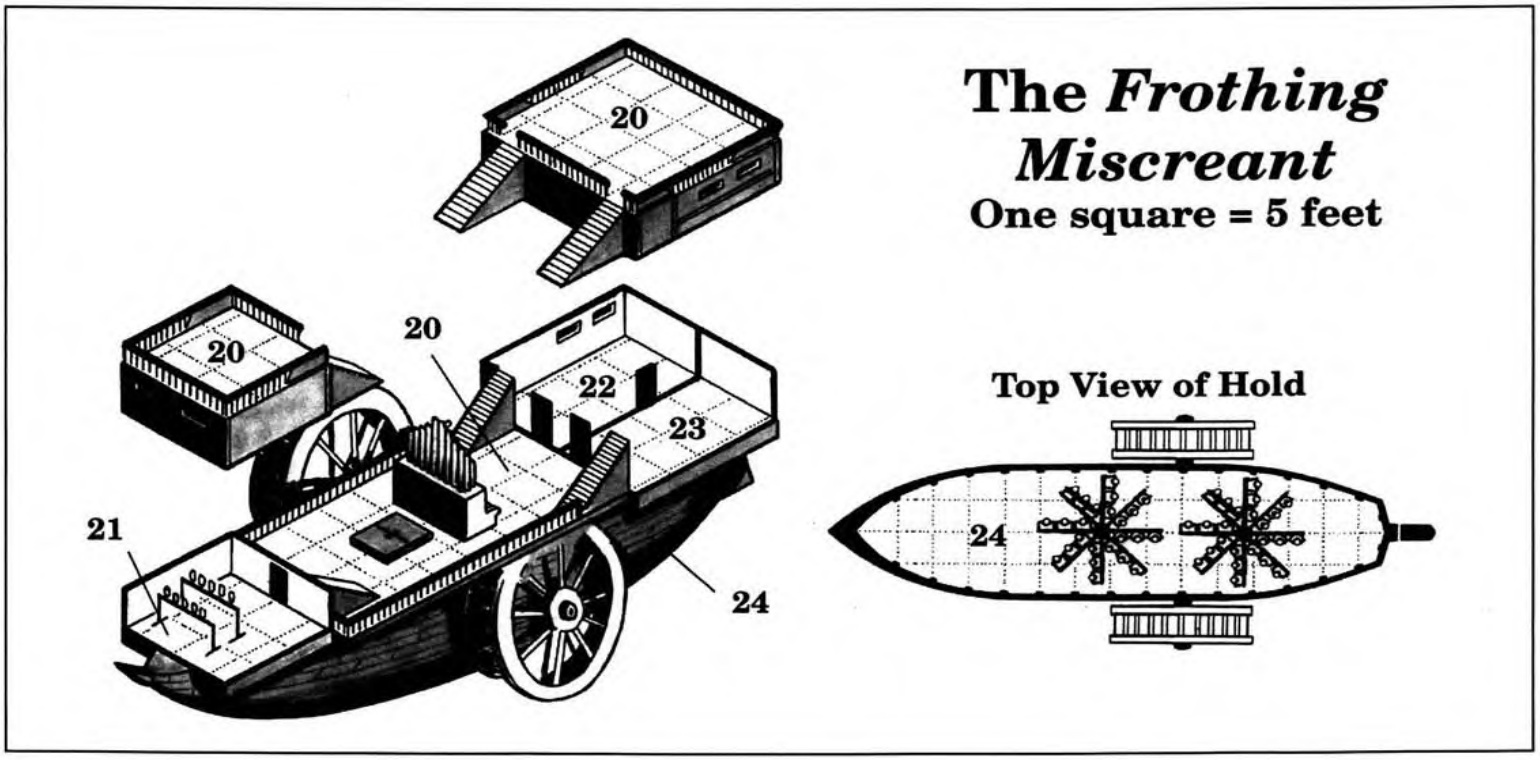
Spells (5/4): 1st—*cure light wounds* (×3), *faerie fire, sanctuary*; 2nd—*aid, chill metal* (×3).

Rock gnomes (4): AC 4; MV 6; HD 1; hp 5 each; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon; SD +3 bonus to saving throws vs. magic; SZ S (3' tall); ML 13; Int average (10); AL NE; XP 65; *MM*/159; banded mail, *fire trap* lance, beartrap paddle, heavy crossbows, ten crossbow bolts, short sword, dagger, signal whistle, pouch containing 1–10 gp.

Firebirds (16 animal skeletons): AC 8; MV 6, fly 15 (C); HD 1–1; hp 3 each; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg special; SA *fire trap* spell causes 1d4+8 points of damage; SD immune to *sleep, charm, hold*, and *fear*; SZ S; ML special; Int non (0); AL N; XP 120; *MM*/315 (variant).

21. Bow Cabin. This room is used to store the ship's arsenal of firebirds. Currently, the arsenal is almost entirely depleted. Only sixteen firebirds (identical to the ones on deck, in area **20**) are stored here, perched firmly on two of fifty portable clothes racks that fill the room.

Firebirds (16 animal skeletons): AC 8; MV 6, fly 15 (C); HD 1–1; hp 3 each; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg special; SA *fire trap* spell causes 1d4+8 points of damage; SD immune to *sleep, charm, hold* and *fear*; SZ S; ML special; Int non (0); AL N; XP 120; *MM*/315 (variant).



22. Fizer's Quarters. When in harbor, Fizer Agate uses this cabin as his personal quarters. As befits the limited space aboard ship, the cabin is sparsely appointed, containing a lantern, a pair of bunks, and a pair of sea chests bolted to the floor. One of the chests is empty; when Skoradin boards the ship, this chest is used to store his possessions. The other chest contains Fizer's possessions: a rain-slicker, two changes of clothing, 50 gp in a pouch, a pipe, a pouch of pipeweed, a beard-trimming kit, and a religious tract espousing the evil philosophy of Talos.

23. Barracks. This room holds hammocks for the eight rock gnomes who crew the ship. Four gnomes are on guard duty on deck at all times. The other four are can be found here, either sleeping or playing jacks with a rubber ball and some caltrops.

Rock gnomes (4): AC 4; MV 6; HD 1; hp 5 each; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon; SD +3 bonus to saving throws vs. magic; SZ S (3' tall); ML 13; Int average (10); AL NE; XP 65; *MM*/159; banded mail, beartrap paddle, short sword, dagger, pouch containing 1–10 gp.

24. Hold. This area contains the capstans and machinery for turning the paddle wheels. Each capstan is pierced by four wooden bars. Currently, three human, humanoid, or demi-human skeletons stand alongside each end of each wooden bar. The skeletons move around the capstan, pushing the bars in front of them when they are commanded by a priest of Talos (either Skoradin or Fizer).

The skeletons can also be commanded to help defend *The Frothing Miscreant* against boarders. Skoradin is aware that his skeletal troops are easily turned or dispelled by clerics and has taken pains to conceal their undead nature. Each skeleton is padded with cotton and clothed in loose garments to conceal its legs and torso. The bony hands are hidden by stiff gauntlets. The empty sockets are artfully disguised with glass eyes, and skillfully crafted masks are glued to their skulls. To lend a more terrifying aspect to the skeletons, Skoradin has fashioned the masks to give them the likeness of mind flayers.

Skeletons (48): AC 7; MV 12; HD 1; hp 5 each; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg 1–6; SD edged and piercing weapons inflict half damage; immune to mind-affecting spells; SZ M; ML special; Int non (0); AL N; XP 65; *MM*/315.

Concluding the Adventure

As a priest of Talos, Skoradin is a loner and unlikely to be missed or avenged. PCs are free to claim the gnome's vessel upon Skoradin's defeat, but good-aligned PCs should feel uneasy about commanding an undead-powered ship in a seafaring campaign. Still, PCs might adapt some of Skoradin's inventions to their own use, and it isn't out of the question that some of Skoradin's gnome associates might revive his ideas—the gnomish cavalry could ride again! Finally, the existence of Skoradin's old adventuring party provides a loose end, and DMs who enjoyed running this adventure might well interject an occasional encounter with some of Skoradin's old adventuring buddies.

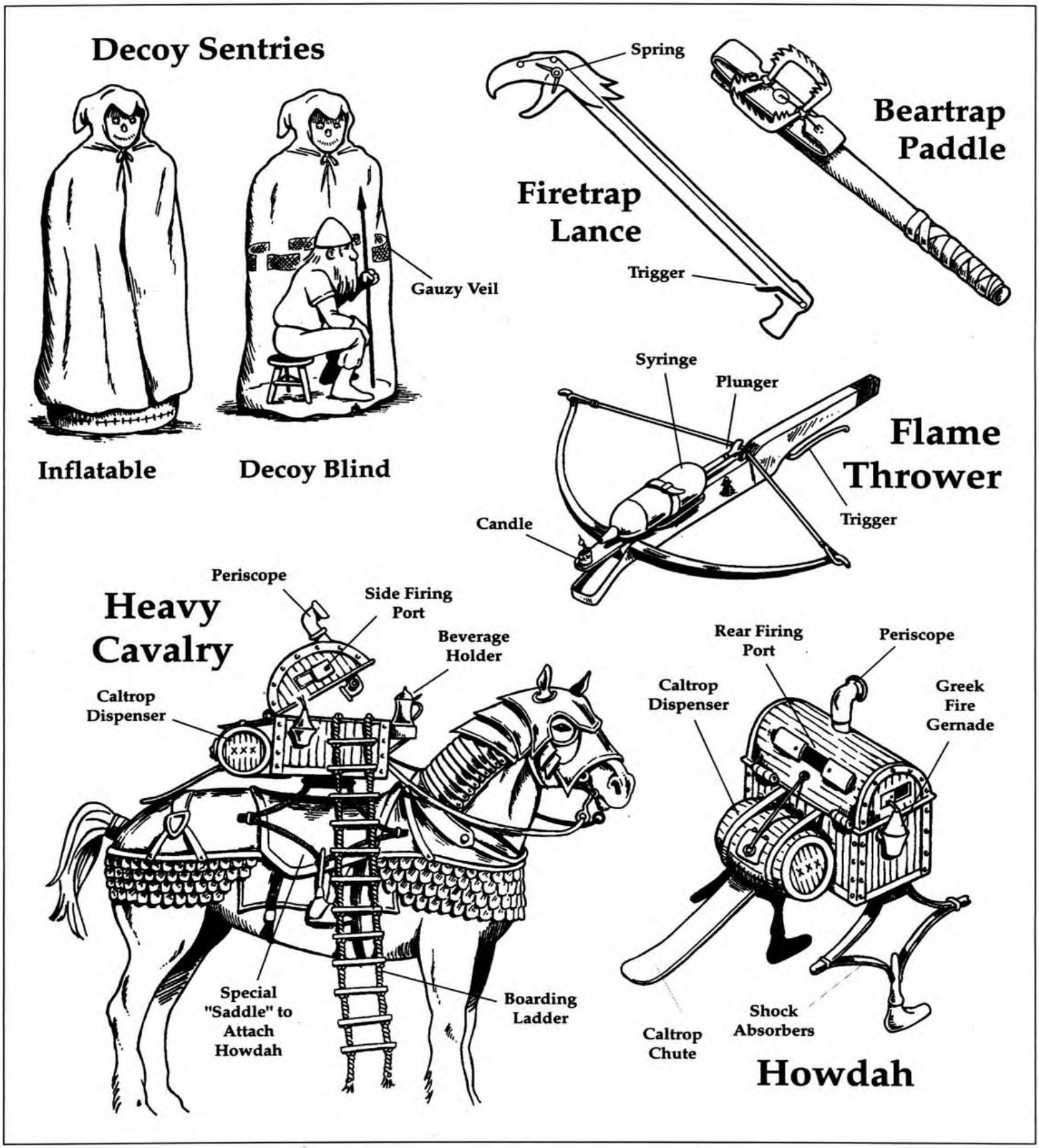
Gnomish Inventions

This adventure includes several new contraptions, which are depicted on the next page.

Flame Thrower

The **flame thrower** is a simple device consisting of a large brass syringe and a large candle mounted on a heavy crossbow. When the syringe is filled with Greek fire, the crossbow drives the syringe plunger, expelling the Greek fire over the candle and igniting it. The candles are gnomish trick-birthday candles and are agonizingly difficult to blow out.

Although it has a range of only 30 feet and takes a full turn to reload, the tight spray from the flame thrower is easily directed toward a single opponent, hosing the target with sticky, flaming naphtha. Opponents are considered to have a base Armor Class of 10, modified only for Dexterity, magical bonuses, and shields larger than bucklers. Victims of a flame thrower attack suffer 2d6 points of damage on the round they are struck, and then another 1d6 points of damage on the subsequent round as the Greek fire continues to burn.


Decoy Sentries
Inflatable
Decoy Blind
Gauzy Veil
Spring
Firetrap Lance
Trigger
Beartrap Paddle
Syringe
Plunger
Flame Thrower
Trigger
Candle
Heavy Cavalry
Periscope
Side Firing Port
Beverage Holder
Caltrop Dispenser
Special "Saddle" to Attach Howdah
Boarding Ladder
Rear Firing Port
Periscope
Caltrop Dispenser
Greek Fire Gernade
Shock Absorbers
Caltrop Chute
Howdah

Beartrap Paddle

The **beartrap paddle** consists of a beartrap bolted to a stick. It takes 4 rounds (and a pair of prying bars) to set the beartrap. The wielder can cause the beartrap to grasp an opponent's weapon, effectively rendering it useless, or attack specific body parts. This requires a successful called shot (imposing a –4 penalty to hit). A weapon or limb grasped by the beartrap paddle is rendered useless until the beartrap is unclenched. Any Small or Medium humanoid creature whose leg is caught in a beartrap suffers a 50% movement rate reduction. Similarly, a character whose arm or hand is caught in a beartrap cannot wield a weapon in that hand or cast a spell with somatic components until the beartrap is released.

In addition to clamping down on weapons and body parts, the jaws of the beartrap paddle inflict 1d6 points of damage.

Perhaps the biggest drawback to the beartrap paddle is that any attack, whether it hits or not, triggers the beartrap, causing it to snap shut and become useless as anything but a poorly balanced club. (Treat any wielder as nonproficient and apply the necessary attack roll penalty.)

Decoy Sentries

The **inflatable decoy sentry** is a leather bag with a weighted bottom and a cork-plugged stem used to inflate the bag. Pitch is smeared over the seams to make the bag more airtight, and a hooded cloak is draped over the bag to make it look vaguely humanoid. In good light, the decoy is an obvious fake to any creature within 100 feet. But at night, especially silhouetted by a campfire, viewers are at least 50% likely to mistake the dummy for a real sentry, and if inclined to hostility, might mistakenly direct attacks at the decoy instead of a genuine opponent.

When an enemy gets wise to the fake inflatable decoy sentry, they are taken in by the **fake inflatable decoy dummy-blind**. This contraption consists of a small, tentlike structure surmounted by a dummy-head, just like the one on a fake inflatable decoy sentry. Lulled into security by the obviously artificial nature of the construction, stealthy intruders completely overlook the presence of a gnome sentry hiding in plain sight beneath the voluminous "cloak." Holes in the "cloak" are concealed by gauzy black veils, permitting the gnome sentry to survey the area around him and fire ranged weapons at anyone who comes into sight.

Fire Trap Lance

Adapted from a gnomish party favor, the ***fire trap* lance** consists of a wooden animal head mounted on a hollow shaft. The animal head has a moveable jaw equipped with a coiled spring that forces the "mouth" into an open position. A string runs from the "jaw" to a trigger at the base of the shaft. Pulling on the trigger tightens the string and snaps the jaw shut.

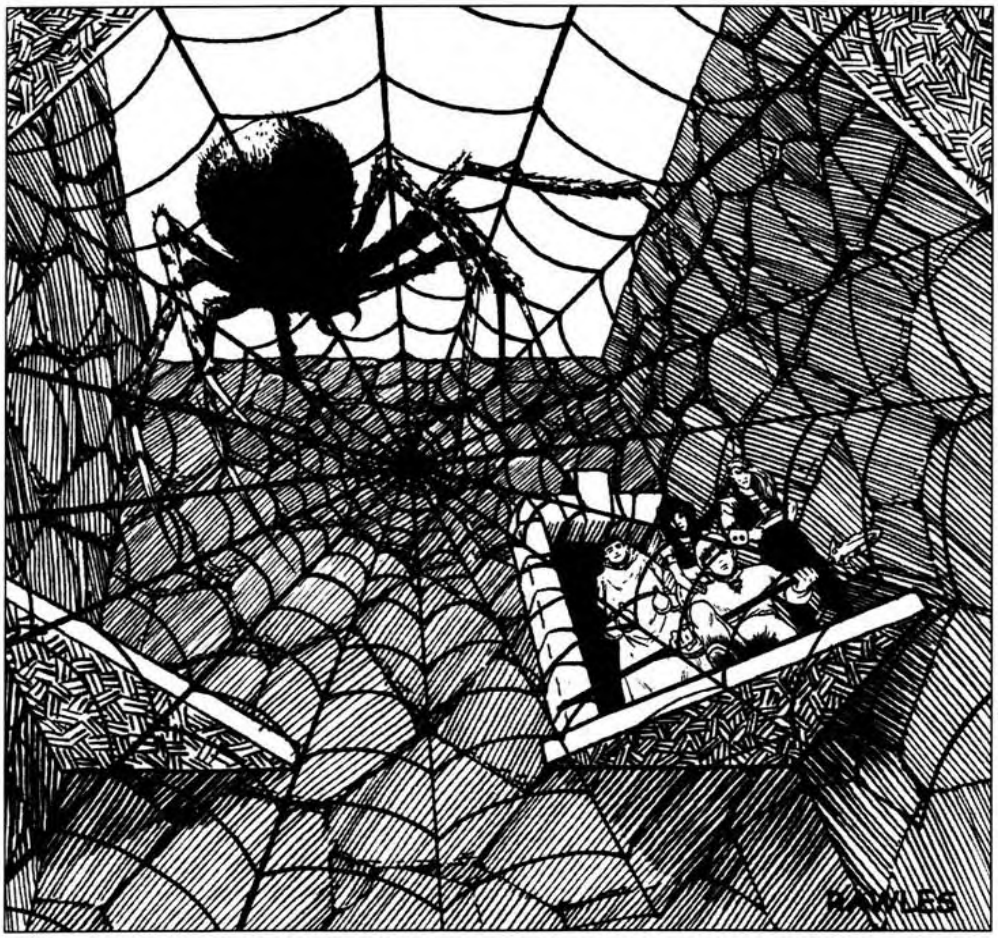
This toy is turned into a deadly weapon by casting a *fire trap* spell on the jaw. Since the "jaw" is held open, the device remains inert until the trigger is pulled and the jaw closes. Upon releasing the string, the jaw is forced open, setting off the the *fire trap* spell, and creating a 5'-radius explosion. So long as the trigger is more than 5 feet from the hinged jaw, the device is safe for the user. The device is limited to a single use, for the string (and sometimes the shaft) is destroyed in the explosion. Gnomes employing these devices enter combat with the trigger already depressed, ensuring an explosion even if they are struck down before their initiative.

Gnomish Heavy Cavalry

The **gnomish heavy cavalry** involves the use of heavy warhorses surmounted by small, sturdy howdahs. The howdahs are crafted from stout chests. With the lids closed, the riders inside the howdahs have the benefit of cover. The howdahs are thick-walled, made of oak, and bound with iron; they are treated as AC 5 and can withstand 35 points of damage. Inside, riders are free to employ their offensive armaments through holes carved in the sides of the howdahs. Opponents with piercing weapons can attempt to shoot or stab through the holes, suffering a –10 attack penalty due to the cover. Even with the lids open, howdah riders receive a bonus of 4 points to their AC from the cover provided by the howdah's sides.

Howdahs are also equipped with a variety of clever devices. Viewing ports on the sides of the howdah can be shuttered, and the gnome rider can still observe the situation outside through a periscope on the top of the chest. A smaller chest or cask mounted on the rear of the howdah is filled with caltrops, and by pulling a string the caltrops spill out of a hatch, bouncing from the horse's armored flank and dispersing in a broad swath behind the mount. The cockpit of each howdah is equipped with two flame throwers and two light hand crossbows. Greek fire grenades mounted to the exterior sides of the howdah can be flung as grenades or used to reload the flame throwers. Ω

Nodwick
www.nodwick.com
by Aaron Williams
THERE'S SKORADIN'S ESTATE! HE MUST BE WHO'S BEHIND THE "FROTHING MISCREANT" ATTACKS.
I HOPE WE CAN STOP HIS ICKY FIRE-BIRDS!
WHAT COULD MAKE A GNOME GO SO BAD?
THERE COULD BE MANY EXPLANATIONS--
LOOK!
WARNING: YOU MUST BE THIS SHORT TO PASS BEYOND THIS POINT. TALLER PERSONS RISK A MESSY AND COMPLEX DEATH TO BE DETAILED LATER.
BEING MISTAKEN FOR A LAWN JOCKEY, PERHAPS..?
SOMEHOW, I DON'T FEEL TOO NERVOUS ABOUT THIS ADVENTURE ANYMORE!



In their ninth challenge, intrepid heroes must confront an eight-legged terror.

CHALLENGE OF CHAMPIONS III

BY JOHNATHAN M. RICHARDS

Made you think!

Artwork by Fred Rawles
Cartography by Diesel

Johnathan would like to thank Paul F. Culotta for volunteering to playtest the original version of this adventure, not only with his own gang of players (Sharon Culotta, Todd Baughman, Donald Pierce, and Sam Everly) but also at the 1998 Game Camp at the Wizards of the Coast Game Center in Seattle.

"Challenge of Champions III" is an AD&D® adventure for a party of four PCs of any level: one wizard, one warrior, one priest, and one rogue. It is a sequel to both "Challenge of Champions" (Issue #58) and "Challenge of Champions II" (Issue #69), but neither adventure is required to enjoy this one. Like the others, this adventure takes place on the outskirts of a major city and can be inserted into almost any campaign.

It is important that the DM read the entire adventure before running it. A firm grasp of each of the ten scenarios is necessary for the smooth operation of the adventure and helps the DM adjudicate alternative solutions the players might devise to each challenge.

This module requires the *MONSTROUS MANUAL*™ tome, a standard #2 pencil, and a small hand mirror.

Adventure Background

For the third year in a row, the Adventurers' Guild is sponsoring an event to test the skills of teams of adventurers. The contest is open to adventuring teams of all levels of experience; however, each team must consist of one wizard, one warrior, one priest, and one rogue. As far as team composition goes, it doesn't matter if the priest is a cleric, a druid, or something exotic like a shukenja; likewise with the other classes. Multiclass and dual-class PCs must choose which "slots" they fill on the team; a dwarven fighter/priest can fill either the priest or warrior slot. Many times the availability of the other slots determines this; in the example above, if there was a warrior in the dwarf's party but no priest, the dwarf would no doubt choose to fill the priest slot for the purpose of the contest.

The contest will be held in two days' time at the edge of the city. Teams have already begun forming and registering for the contest. Some teams have participated in previous Challenges of Champions, while others are new to this type of contest.

Each team must register at the Guild Headquarters in the city by sundown the night before the contest. The team members must each provide the guild with their individual names, "profession" (wizard, warrior, priest, or rogue), and team name. Each PC must also pay the entrance fee of 5 gp, unless he or she is already a Guild member, in which case the entry fee is waived (another benefit of Guild membership). If the PCs aren't Guild members, they hear the standard sales pitch:

For a mere 25 gp per year, the Adventurers' Guild provides the PCs with a wealth of information, beneficial contacts, and a slight discount on standard adventuring gear. Other benefits can be added as the DM sees fit; possibilities include selling expendable magical items like scrolls and potions at reasonable cost and providing a place to sell the various treasures recovered while adventuring.

The winners of the contest are each granted a lifetime membership into the Adventurers' Guild, as well as the trophies and prestige usually associated with such an honor.

For the Dungeon Master

The contest itself is a series of ten scenarios, each designed to test the leadership, adaptability, and cohesion of the adventuring group. The scenarios are of equal difficulty to everyone, regardless of level. In other words, a 20th-level wizard should have no advantage over a 1st-level one. In addition, an attempt has been made to negate any advantage those contestants who went through the previous Challenges of Champions might have over those who are experiencing the contest for the first time.

The rules are as follows: The team members must show up in regular clothing, as armor is not permitted in the contest. Weapons cannot be brought to the contest grounds; those scenarios involving weapons have them pre-positioned. The same goes for magical items of any type. Spellcasters can have no spells memorized; all spells used in the contest are cast through *rings of spell storing*, as this allows all spells to be cast at the same level and negates any advantage higher-level wizards and priests might have over lower-level ones. Those wizards with familiars are not allowed to bring their animals into the contest. All PCs are inspected by a Guild wizard using *detect magic*, and those attempting to smuggle magical items into the contest are immediately disqualified.

At the start of each scenario, the official (a member of the Adventurers' Guild overseeing the execution of that particular scenario) briefs the team on the starting equipment they can use. Command words for magical items are normally provided at this time. Once the team is satisfied that all equipment is in place, the official begins reading the briefing, and the clock starts ticking. The briefing consists of the goal the team must try to accomplish, as well as any special rules for that scenario.

The team has 15 minutes to accomplish each scenario. At the scenario's end, all starting equipment must be placed back in position for the next team, and the PCs move on to the next scenario. Unless told otherwise, the PCs cannot take anything from one scenario to the next.

Rounding Out the Team

If the PCs are short a character class or two, they can meet up with any of the four extra PCs described here. These extra PCs are all 1st level and have avoided signing up together as a team because they fear they don't have the experience needed to perform well in the contest.

The DM should feel free to use these extra PCs to fill out the party for the purpose of this adventure; once the adventure is over, they can either stay on as NPCs or go their own separate ways, as best fits the DM's campaign. In any case, the extra PCs should not be used by the DM to provide input during the scenarios. The contest is designed to challenge the ingenuity and resourcefulness of the players, after all.

Michael "Wild Dog" Seryllion, human male F1: AC 10; MV 12; hp 8; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; Str 14, Dex 12, Con 12, Int 11, Wis 10, Cha 13; ML 11; AL NG.

Michael is a jovial fellow, quick with a joke or a terrible pun. He is proficient in the use of the longsword, dagger, quarterstaff, and light crossbow. Nonweapon proficiencies include Running (6), Swimming (14), and Animal Training (large dogs, 10).

Joannie "the Firehearted" Nyzanthar, human female W1: AC 10; MV 12; hp 4; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; Str 9, Dex 10, Con 9, Int 14, Wis 10, Cha 8; ML 11; AL LN.

Although good-natured, Joannie earned her nickname after blowing her top once over bureaucratic stupidity. She is proficient with the staff. Nonweapon proficiencies include Ancient Languages (14), Artistic Ability (sketching, 10), and Reading/Writing (15).

Geraldine Goldendawn, half-elf female P1: AC 10; MV 12; hp 5; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; Str 10, Dex 9, Con 12, Int 10, Wis 11, Cha 10; ML 11; AL CG.

Geraldine was born and raised in a coastal city and learned to swim at an early age. She is proficient in the use of the mace and the club. Nonweapon proficiencies include Swimming (10), Fishing (10), Seamanship (10), and Navigation (8).

Scotty Quickflash, human male T1: AC 10; MV 12; hp 6; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; Str 12, Dex 14, Con 10, Int 9, Wis 9, Cha 12; ML 11; AL CN. Thief abilities: PP 15%, OL 10%, F/RT 15%, MS 20%, HS 35%, DN 15%, CW 70%, RL 0%.

Although a junior member of the Thieves Guild, Scotty is already developing a reputation because of his quickness. He is proficient in the use of the short sword and the dagger. Nonweapon proficiencies include Jumping (12) and Tightrope Walking (14).

The statistics above describe the four extra PCs as they appear for the 3rd Annual Challenge of Champions. If the DM wishes to make them permanent additions to the party, he or she should outfit them with weapons, armor, spells, and the like.

If the adventuring group does not have a member of each of the four main classes, the PCs can recruit one or more NPCs from the single hopefuls milling about the contest. See the "Rounding Out the Team" sidebar for more information.

A word of caution: Although this adventure can be played with one DM and one player (with the player running all four team members), that puts the entire burden of coming up with solutions on the lone player. Not that this can't be done; it's just easier with input and ideas from several people. The odds of a team doing well usually increase with the number of active players participating.

On the other hand, this adventure can be used as a good "filler" on a night when some of the players can't make it to the gaming session. Rather than have someone else run their PCs in their absence or go on an adventure without their PCs as part of the team, the DM can split up the four NPCs in the "Rounding Out the Team" sidebar between the players who are available and have them go through this adventure as a team. That way, those who didn't make it to the gaming session don't have their PCs lagging behind in the experience point department.

Running the Scenarios

At the beginning of each scenario, the DM should show the players the map corresponding to that event. (Permission is granted to photocopy the player handouts and maps for home game use only.) The map shows the layout of the area the PCs have to work in. Allow the players to read the appropriate spells in *The Player's Handbook* and magical item entries in the *DUNGEON MASTER® Guide*. Once all of the players have had a chance to do so, the DM should give them the task briefing.

Once the briefing begins, the DM should be tracking the time. (A stopwatch comes in handy for this.) The PCs have a total of 15 minutes to accomplish the task, but part of the time will be spent on deciding what to do, and this is done in "real time" by the players. Once the players have decided upon a course of action, the DM stops the clock, and the PCs have the remaining time to accomplish their actions. For instance, if the briefing takes 30 seconds to read, and the players spend three and a half minutes deciding on a course of action, the PCs have 11 minutes to accomplish the scenario's goal.

Score Sheet

Team Name: _____

Scenario	Wizard	Warrior	Priest	Rogue	Total
#1 HEARTH	____	____	____	____	____
#2 TEES	____	____	____	____	____
#3 LEAD	____	____	____	____	____
#4 CYAN	____	____	____	____	____
#5 FORMER	____	____	____	____	____
#6 MEDIA	____	____	____	____	____
#7 EVICT	____	____	____	____	____
#8 DIM	____	____	____	____	____
#9 IMP	____	____	____	____	____
#10 CAPE	____	____	____	____	____
TOTAL	____	____	____	____	____

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The DM is provided with the "school solution" to each scenario. This is the way the designers at the Adventurers' Guild expect the goal to be accomplished. However, it is by no means the only or necessarily best way to accomplish the goal. It is provided so the DM can see one way for each goal to be accomplished, in the event the PCs fail to accomplish it and the players don't think it can be done. Be flexible in all cases, and allow a good idea an appropriate chance of success. Some avenues of approach are not good methods, however, and many of these are provided to the DM as examples of what does not work.

The Guild official proctoring each scenario is responsible for ensuring the safety of the adventurers. While many of the scenarios place the contestants in danger of physical harm, the official has been provided with a means of countering that danger; for example, several scenarios involve crossing bodies of water, and the Guild wizards proctoring those scenarios are ready to cast *water breathing* immediately upon signs of trouble.

Other dangers are more artificial, like opening a sealed jar of a concoction representing "yellow mold." In any case, the official has the power to declare any PC "dead" at any time and does so if he or she has to save the PC or if the PC commits a "lethal" act (like opening the jar of "yellow mold"). PCs who have been declared "dead" are not allowed to participate further in the scenario in which they "died," and they receive no points for that scenario. They are allowed to watch their teammates finish the scenario without them, but any assistance on their part, whether it be actual participation in accomplishing the scenario's goal or even shouting suggestions from the sidelines, disqualifies the entire team. Once the team moves on to the next scenario, the "dead" PC is restored to "living" status and continues as before.

As the PCs complete each scenario, record their scores on the score sheet provided. This makes it easier for the players to see how they are doing and, more importantly, lets the DM tally the final scores when the 3rd Annual Challenge of Champions is over.

Players' Background

The day of the contest, the teams are all led to the large, multicolored tent where the initial briefings take place. This year there are a total of sixteen teams competing. Before the contest officially begins, some of the teams pass around a sign-up sheet for a betting pool. Not all teams have entered the pool, and there is no pressure to do so, but those interested are putting up 100 gp per team, and the winning team (among those in the pool) goes home with the pot.

The betting pool has become a tradition among many of the Challenge of Champions competitors. Since the Adventurers' Guild has no interest in providing monetary rewards for winning (that's not why they've designed the contests, after all), several contestants have taken it upon themselves to provide their own "monetary reward." The betting pool serves as a sort of "back-up prize" as well—even if the PCs don't win the contest this time around, there's a chance they might at least get to take home some money. So far, nine of the teams have each put in 100 gp, so if the PCs decide to enter, the pot will be 1,000 gp, or 250 gp per member on the winning team. Of course, since the contestants aren't allowed to bring anything with them to the contest, none of the teams actually has the money with them, but the other teams help ensure that when the contest is over, the losers pay up.

Farthingale, the heavyset Guildmaster officially running the Challenge of Champions, shows up at the tent, and everyone gets down to business. First, Farthingale goes over all of the ground rules and answers any initial questions. After that, each team's name is entered on a slip of paper, and the names are drawn randomly out of a barrel to determine the order in which the teams will compete. Luck must be with you today, for your team's name is drawn to go first!

At this point the DM should go over all of the rules with the players and answer any questions they might have. Once the players are ready to proceed, continue by reading or paraphrasing the following:

A gangly young lad dressed in an ill-fitting Guild robe escorts you to a small room immediately outside the start of the first scenario. There you are met by two Guild members: Jayme, a red-bearded warrior who gives everyone a quick frisk, and Kuthbar, a wizard who checks everyone over with a *detect magic* spell. Jayme apologizes for the inconvenience but notes that in past years some have tried sneaking in magical items or lockpicks, hoping for an edge in the contest. "We'd not want anyone winning that way, now, would we? Well, if you're all ready then, just step through this door and Luther will begin the first scenario with you. Best of luck!"

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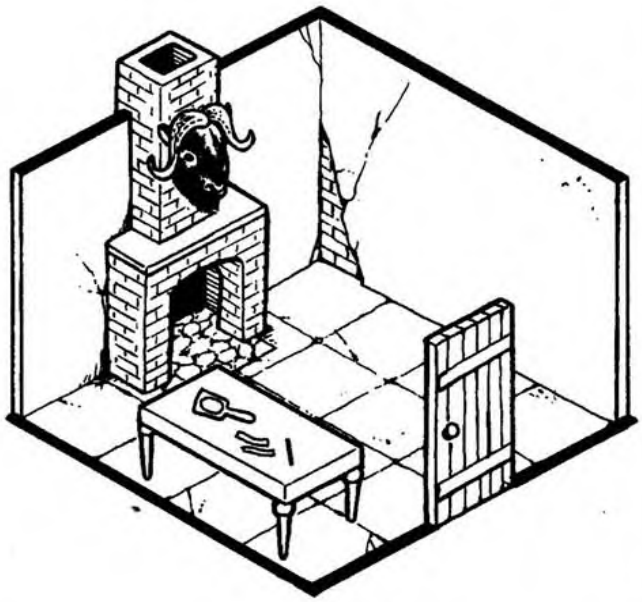
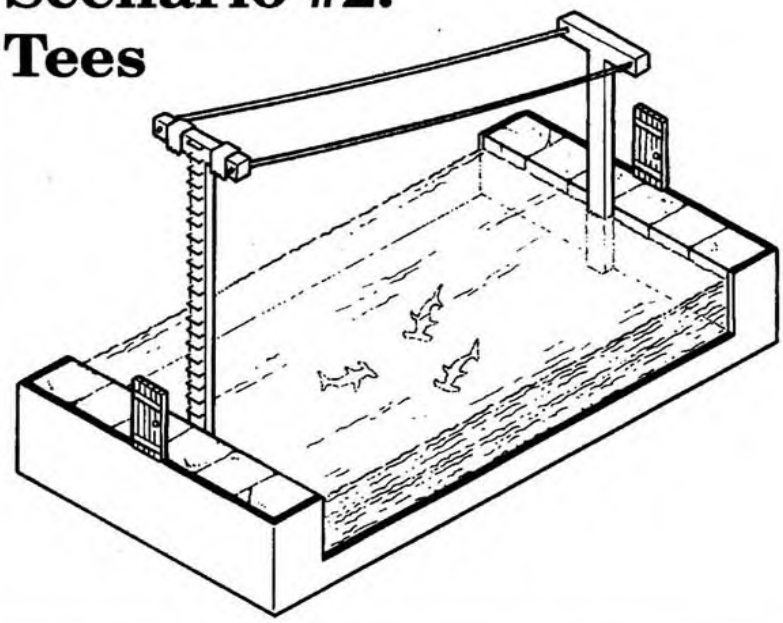
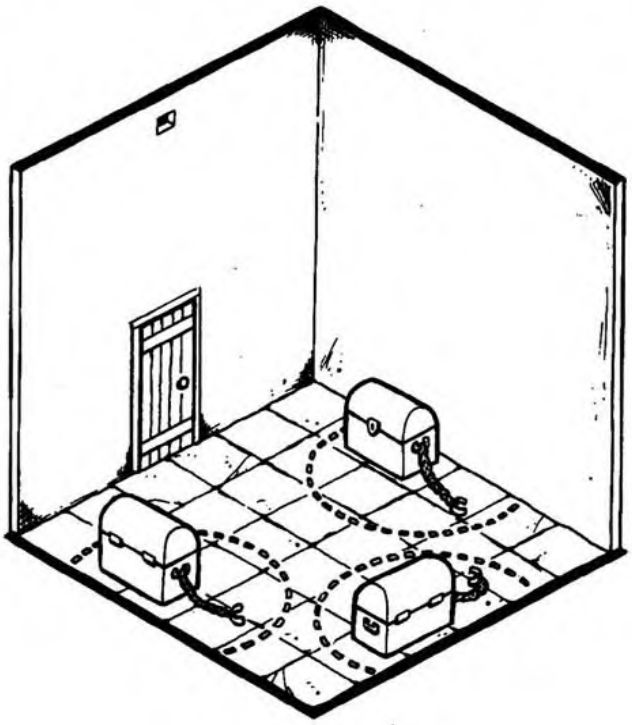


Scenario #1: Hearth

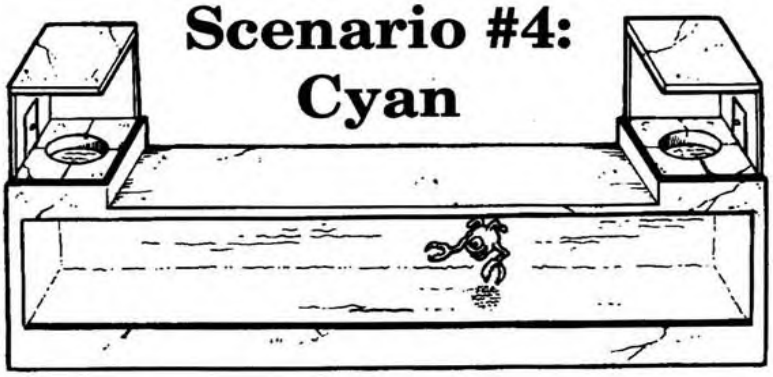
Scenario #2: Tees



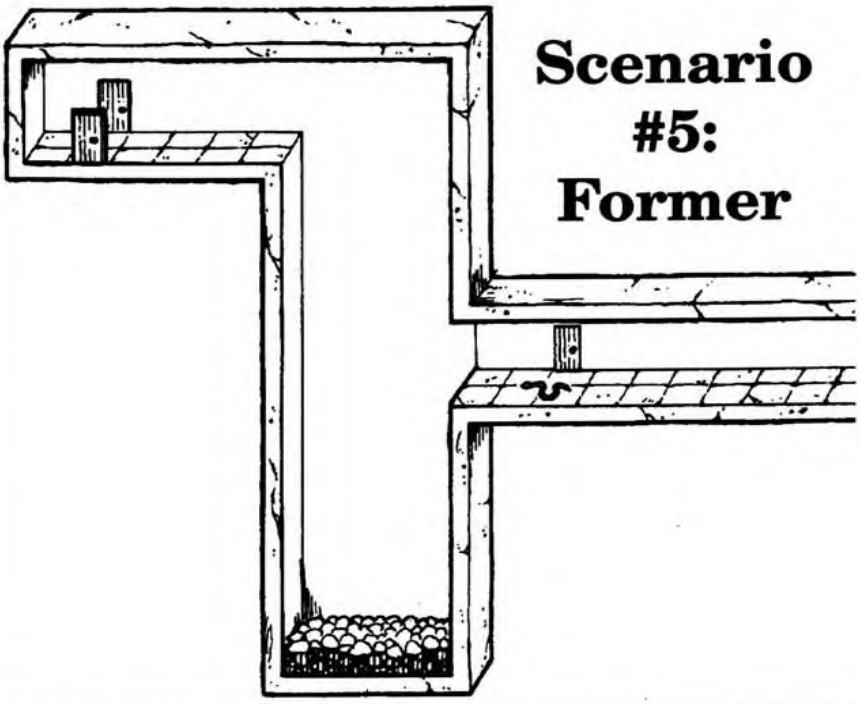
Scenario #3: Lead



Scenario #4: Cyan



Scenario #5: Former



Solution for Scenario #10 Handout

HEARTH	EVICT	IMP	LEAD			
FORMER	CYAN	DIM	MEDIA	TEES	CAPE	

Scenario #1: HEARTH

Read or paraphrase the following to begin the scenario:

> You step through the door and find yourself in a 10' × 10' room. On the wall across from you is a fireplace, above which hangs the stuffed head of an ox. To the left stands a table, upon which rest a small hand mirror, a thin black wand, and two strips of paper—one covered with peculiar runes, the other with various letters. There are no other doors or windows.
>
> "Good morning," says Luther, the Guild rogue in charge of the first scenario. "For this first test, you need to find a way to activate the secret door hidden in the fireplace hearth. No, no, don't bother looking for it—it's magical; everything you need to open it is right here on the table. You need to pass through the secret door to move on to the subsequent scenarios. You've got 15 minutes to find a way to do so. Begin!"

The room is lit by a *continual light* spell.

Scoring: 10 points per PC who makes it through the secret door in the fireplace within the 15-minute time limit. Since this is a puzzle-based scenario, the team will probably earn either all 40 points or none at all!

Solution: The PCs place the rune-covered strip of paper on the mirror, reflecting the runes into the words "AIM IT AT OX MOUTH." (The letters are sideways, and must be read down.) To use the wand, the other strip of paper must be wound around it. Hold one end of the strip at a 45° angle from the pencil and wrap it around so that the edges touch, then continue winding the strip in such fashion. When done correctly, the letters on the paper line up to read "COMMAND WORD IS ALBROZAR." One PC takes the wand, points it at the ox's mouth, and says the command word. A beam of light will then strike the ox's mouth, causing the back of the fireplace hearth to open. The PCs then exit the room through the secret door.

DM Notes: The secret door can be opened only in the manner described above; searches for secret doors prove unsuccessful. The strip of paper with the command word was made to fit around a standard #2 pencil, so the DM should have a pencil (representing the wand) available for the players. A real mirror is also necessary for this scenario, so the players can reflect the rune markings provided.

If the players decipher the command word for the wand but fail to pick up on the "AIM IT AT OX MOUTH" message, they have a 40% chance of hitting the ox mouth with the beam if they specifically state that they're aiming at the ox head.

If the PCs fail to solve this scenario, Luther activates the secret door, allowing the PCs to head on to the next scenario.

Once the PCs have finished the first scenario, mark their scores down on the scoresheet and then proceed with the next scenario.

Scenario #2: TEES

Read or paraphrase the following to begin the scenario:

> The second scenario takes place in a 30' × 60' room with a high ceiling. Walking through the door, you find yourselves facing a T-shaped projection towering high above you; another similar, but shorter, projection rears up at the far end of the room. Twin ropes connect the ends of the "T"s like clotheslines. Each "T" rises up out of the pool of water that stretches across nearly the entire room. You can see a series of metal rungs running up the shaft of each "T," forming a ladder of sorts.
>
> "Observe," says Mercurio the wizard, the proctor of this scenario, sweeping a hand at the dark waters. You spot several T-shaped forms swimming around in the water; closer examination reveals them as hammerhead sharks. "Your task this time is simple: Cross to the far side of the room. Should you choose to swim, you will be eaten by the sharks. Touching either of the ropes is equally deadly, for we have coated them with a fast-acting contact poison. It would seem your best bet is to use the *carpet of flying* we have positioned at the top of this post"—here he indicates the T-shaped structure before you—"but, if you'll notice, there are in fact two carpets up there. The other is a *rug of smothering*. I won't tell you which is which, but the command word for each is 'aloft.' One final thing: Each rug will only hold a single passenger. Therefore, the first one up will have the best shot of getting safely across, at the expense of the others. Begin!"

The room is lit with *continual light* spells. The "T" closest to the PCs stands 30 feet above the surface of the water, while the far "T" stands only 20 feet high. The top surface of each "T" is 2 feet wide and 10 feet long. Both the *carpet of flying* and the *rug of smothering* are of the 3' × 5' one-person variety. The side walls of the room are too smooth to climb.

Scoring: 10 points per PC who makes it to the far side within the 15-minute time period.

Solution: The PCs climb to the top of the first "T," then pair up at each rope. Each team of two twists a carpet lengthwise (as if wringing out a towel), then places it over one of the poisoned "clothesline" ropes. With one PC grasping each end, they jump off the higher "T" and slide down the "clothesline" rope to the lower "T." Once there, the PCs maneuver onto the ladder one at a time, climb down, and exit the chamber.

DM Notes: This scenario was designed to tempt the PCs into fighting among each other, since at first glance it seems as if only one PC can ride the *carpet of flying* to victory. If the players try to have their PCs beat each other up the ladder, have each one roll for initiative to determine who reaches the top first. Similarly, if they try pushing each other into the water, use the following method: Assign one of the two PCs as the aggressor, the other as the defender. (The players can roll for initiative to determine who gets to "attack" first, rerolling ties.) Each PC rolls a Strength check; if both rolls succeed, the player who rolls the lowest succeeds in his desired action (throwing the other PC in the water if the attacker; resisting being thrown in if the defender). Ties go to the defender.

Assuming the PCs choose to cooperate, there are still problems with using the *carpet of flying* to ride to the other side. First, there's no way to tell which carpet is which. (The one on the right is the *carpet of flying*; the one on the left is the *rug of smothering*.) If a PC sits on the *rug of smothering* and speaks the command word, he or she is immediately ensnared and pitches off the "T" into the waters below. The same holds true if a PC sits on the *carpet of flying* and then "overloads" it with an extra PC or two. A PC must sit upon the *carpet of flying* to control it; he or she cannot ride it to the far end and then command it to fly back for the next PC.

Anyone touching either rope directly is paralyzed and plummets into the water. A PC with the Tightrope Walking nonweapon proficiency can attempt to walk along a "clothesline" rope to the far end (provided he or she is wearing some sort of foot covering). A single proficiency check is made at a –10 penalty; there are no further modifiers due to a lack of both wind and a balancing pole. A successful roll indicates the PC made it all the way to the far end without incident; failure indicates a plunge into the water.

If the PCs use the twisted carpets to slide down to the far "T," they must each make a Dexterity check (at a +4 bonus) to determine their success at climbing onto the metal rungs once they reach the end. Failure indicates a plunge into the water.

Anyone falling into (or voluntarily entering) the water has *water breathing* cast upon him as needed; in any case, the PC is declared "dead" for this scenario, presumed to have

been eaten by the hammerhead sharks (in reality, *polymorphed* Guild wizards).

Hammerhead sharks (3): AC 6; MV swim 24; HD 8; hp 24 each; THAC0 13; #AT 1; Dmg 3–12; SZ L (15' long); ML 10; Int high (14); AL N; XP 650; *MM*/117 (fish—modified).

Scenario #3: LEAD

Read or paraphrase the following to begin the scenario:

> The next scenario takes place in a 15' × 15' room. Inside are three identical metal treasure chests. Each has a short chain and manacle attached to one handle; the manacles are snapped around the ankles of the wizard, warrior, and priest. Above the door is a tiny niche.
>
> "This one tests the rogue," says Justin, the gruff Guild warrior proctoring this scenario, as he snaps a manacle around the rogue's wrist. Attached to the rogue's manacle is a short chain with a metal key. "Now listen up: This here key opens all three of them chests. One of 'em is safe to open, and inside it is another key to both the door and your ankle manacles. The other two chests are both trapped. Anybody touching a trapped chest when it's opened is killed—that means both the rogue and whoever's chained to the chest. Up there in the cubbyhole by the ceiling is a *ring of x-ray vision* that might be useful! Of course, I ain't seen a body yet that could climb up this particular wall!
>
> "Only you, rogue, can open the chests, so make sure you open the right one! You have 15 minutes to get outta this room. Begin!"

The room is lit with a *continual light* spell. The cubbyhole above the door is 2 inches high, 5 inches wide, 2 inches deep, and 15 feet above the floor. The walls are all too smooth to climb. The door is locked by the proctor at the start of the scenario. Each of the three chests is heavy, lined with lead, and requires two people to lift (one at each end). The dotted lines on the scenario map show how far the three PCs chained to the chests can reach.

Scoring: 10 points per PC who exits the room within the 15-minute time limit.

Solution: Since the rogue can't climb the wall, he and another PC drag a chest directly under the cubbyhole, the PC stands on the chest, and the rogue stands on the other PC's shoulders. Putting on the *ring of x-ray vision*, the rogue climbs down and verifies that the chests are lined with lead. He then turns each chest over on its side (the bottoms of the chests are not lead-lined) and sees which chest contains the key. Opening that chest, he uses the key to unlock his companions' ankle manacles and the door.

Can you say, "Shark-bait?"

DM Notes: The chest to which the priest is manacled contains the key, wrapped in cotton to prevent it from making noise if the chests are shaken. The other two are trapped so that a bolt of electricity zaps anyone in contact with the chest (the PC chained to that chest and the rogue) when opened. The traps are fashioned so that they cannot be discovered ahead of time safely. (A rogue's Find/Remove Traps skill won't work in this case.) The electrical jolt inflicts no actual damage, but both characters are declared "dead" nonetheless.

Optionally, the PCs can simply ignore the *ring of x-ray vision* and just "wing it," hoping they'll get lucky the first time. Of course, since none of the other PCs can move his or her chest without assistance, it would behoove the rogue to lug the chests near enough to each other that if the rogue guesses incorrectly and "kills" himself and another PC with an incorrect guess, the remaining two PCs can reach the key and try their luck at another chest. That way, at least somebody on the team will earn 10 points.

Table 1: Swimming Rates

PC's Base Movement	Proficient Without Ring
6	1 round
12	½ round
	With Ring
6	½ round
12	¼ round
PC's Base Movement	**Nonproficient Without Ring**
6	3 rounds
12	1½ rounds
	With Ring
6	½ round
12	¼ round

If the rogue survives this scenario and rescues at least one other PC, he or she earns the *rogue's key*. The *key* will be worn (on a chain around the neck, like an amulet) in subsequent scenarios.

Scenario #4: CYAN

Read or paraphrase the following to begin the scenario:

> You are led to a small 10' × 10' room by another Guild proctor, this time a wizard named Mussfinch. In the middle of the floor is a circular opening, 6 feet in diameter. Through the hole you see only water.
>
> "This one should prove interesting," remarks Mussfinch. "Below this small room is a pool of water, 100 feet long. At the far end is a room just like this one. In that far room is the equipment you might need to complete this scenario. There you will find a *ring of free action* and an 8'-square sheet of fabric, dyed the shade of blue-green known as cyan, the same color that the walls, floor, and ceiling of this room, and of the pool below you, are painted. The reason for this is simple: In the pool below lives an ancient eye of the deep. The creature attacks everyone it sees, but its vision is failing, and it cannot see the color cyan. You must all make it to the room at the top of the other end of the pool within 15 minutes. The only items you start with at this end are a *necklace of adaptation* and a single dose of a potion of *rainbow hues*. Questions? Begin!"

Both upper rooms are lit by *continual light* spells. The pool itself is lit only by the light from the holes in the floors of those two rooms, making the pool somewhat murky in the middle. However, this also makes it easy to find the two holes while in the water of the pool. The eye of the deep begins at the far end of the pool, near the "ceiling" of the underwater room.

Scoring: 10 points per PC who makes it to the far room above the other end of the pool within the 15-minute time period.

Solution: One PC (preferably one with the Swimming nonweapon proficiency) places the *necklace of adaptation* around his or her neck, drinks the potion, and turns the color cyan. The PC then enters the water and swims to the far side, entering the other room. There the PC dons the *ring of free action*, grabs the cyan sheet, and swims back to the starting room. Another PC bundles himself or herself up in the sheet; the cyan-colored PC ferries him or her to the exit room, swims back to the start with the sheet, and repeats the process with the other two PCs.

DM Notes: Table 1 shows how long it takes a PC to swim across the pool, based on his or her standard Movement Rate, whether or not the PC has the Swimming nonweapon proficiency, and whether or not the PC is wearing the *ring of free action*. The eye of the deep is old and no longer has any of its magical abilities; it attacks only with its claws and teeth. Mussfinch casts *water breathing* on any PCs who run out of air underwater; such PCs are then declared "dead" for the rest of the scenario. (Note, however, that even PCs with a Constitution of 3 can hold their breath for a full round, more than enough time for the cyan-colored PC to cross the pool with them once he or she is wearing the *ring of free action*.) The same goes if the proctor must cast a *hold monster* on the eye of the deep to save a PC from being killed by the creature.

One strategy employed by many teams is to take the sheet and drape it over the eye of the deep to block its eyesight, thus enabling the other PCs to swim over to the far room on their own. This is not a good idea, as the eye of the deep is old but not stupid. It can feel the sheet, and one round after being draped it rips the sheet to pieces with its claws. This makes the cyan sheet useless for the rest of the scenario and makes it nearly impossible for the other PCs to cross the room successfully. However, the sheet can be held up in front of the eye of the deep (as long as it does not touch the creature) by the cyan-colored PC to block its view of the other PCs swimming to the other side of the pool. The cyan-colored PC must make a successful Intelligence check each round to keep the sheet aligned correctly to block the other PCs from the eye of the deep's view.

Eye of the deep: AC 5; MV swim 6; HD 10; hp 46; THAC0 11; #AT 3; Dmg 2–8/2–8/1–6; SZ,M (5' diameter); ML 15; Int very (11); AL LE; XP 1,400; *MM*/21 (beholder—modified).

Scenario #5: FORMER

Read or paraphrase the following to begin the scenario:

> After drying off quickly with a towel (and after being fed a liquid that counteracts the effects of the potion of *rainbow hues*), a Guild escort takes you to meet Julian, the Guild wizard in charge of running the next scenario. He stands before a closed door.
>
> "Beyond this door is a short corridor," he begins. "It leads to a vertical shaft, at the bottom of which lives a former—a type of deepspawn capable of generating monsters with which it has come into contact. The former sleeps beneath a pile of rubble, and it would be best for you not to awaken it. Halfway down the vertical shaft is another corridor, this one guarded by a serpent. Down that corridor is the exit door that will take you closer to your goal. You must all make it through the exit door within 15 minutes, using only a 15'-long ladder, a 50'-long rope, and a *ring of spell storing* loaded with the priest spells *command* and *snake charm*." He drops the *ring* into the priest's hand. "There is another rope in the lower corridor with the snake, if you can get to it. This scenario counts as the priest's test. Begin!" With that, Julian opens the door and ushers you in.

The entire area in this scenario is lit with *continual light* spells. The shaft is 60 feet deep with loose rocks and boulders at the bottom, beneath which lies the former. Thirty feet from the shaft's floor is the lower corridor. Directly across from the door first entered by the PCs at the start of the scenario is another door; it leads to an empty 10' × 10' room.

Scoring: 10 points per PC who makes it through the exit door in the lower corridor within the 15-minute time limit. The priest earns only 5 points if he or she isn't the one to deal with the snake, or if he or she fails to lead at least one other party member to safety.

Solution: The PCs tie a loop at one end of the rope, place it over the ladder, and extend the ladder horizontally over the vertical shaft until it sticks out midway. While the other three PCs anchor the ladder and hold the rope, the priest climbs out onto the end of the ladder, slips a foot into the loop of rope, and is slowly lowered down the shaft. When the PC is level with the lower corridor, he or she casts *snake charm* on the serpent, then swings back

A breakfast of champions: Three parts olive slime, one part green slime, and a dash of goo.

and forth until he or she can reach the ledge of the corridor. Once on the ledge, the priest unties the loop in the rope and fastens that end to one end of the rope found in the lower corridor. Holding on to the end of the rope, the priest signals to the other PCs, and they pull the ladder back in. Opening both doors in the upper corridor, they place the ladder across the doorways, tying their end of the rope to one of the ladder's middle rungs, then climb down the rope one at a time, as the priest keeps the rope steady. Once everyone is in the lower corridor, they exit via the door.

DM Notes: The *command* spell is useless on the serpent, as it understands no language spoken by the PCs. If the priest thinks the weight of the PCs climbing down might pull him or her into the shaft, the priest can tie his or her end of the rope to the doorknob until everyone makes it down safely.

The serpent does not attack anyone once it falls under the *snake charm* spell, so long as everyone leaves it alone. Otherwise, it attacks, causing 1 point of damage and injecting a poison that causes death (onset time 15 minutes, and the antidote is provided to anyone needing it at the end of the scenario). Anyone bitten by the snake is declared "dead" for the scenario.

Anyone falling or dropping anything into the bottom of the chasm (including the end of the rope or the snake on the lower ledge) causes the "former" to awaken. Once awake, it creates four giant wasps that fly up from between the boulders at the bottom of the shaft and attack the PCs. At that point, those PCs already in the lower corridor can flee through the door and earn their 10 points, but everyone else is declared "dead." PCs falling down the shaft have *feather fall* spells cast upon them and are declared "dead" for the rest of the scenario.

The giant wasps are merely illusions crafted by Guild illusionists hiding invisibly between the rocks at the bottom of the shaft. The snake, however, is real.

Giant wasps: AC 4; MV 6, fly 21 (B); HD 4; hp 18 each; THAC0 17; #AT 2; Dmg 2–8/1–4; SA poison; SZ M (5' long); ML 20; Int non (0); AL N; XP 420; *MM*/204–205 (insect).

Poisonous snake: AC 6; MV 15; HD 2+1; hp 9; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg 1; SA poison; SZ S (5' long); ML 8; Int animal (1); AL N; XP 270; *MM*/320 (snake).

If the priest subdues the snake and leads at least one other party member through the door in the lower corridor, he or she is awarded the *priest's key*, which is worn in subsequent scenarios.

Scenario #6: MEDIA

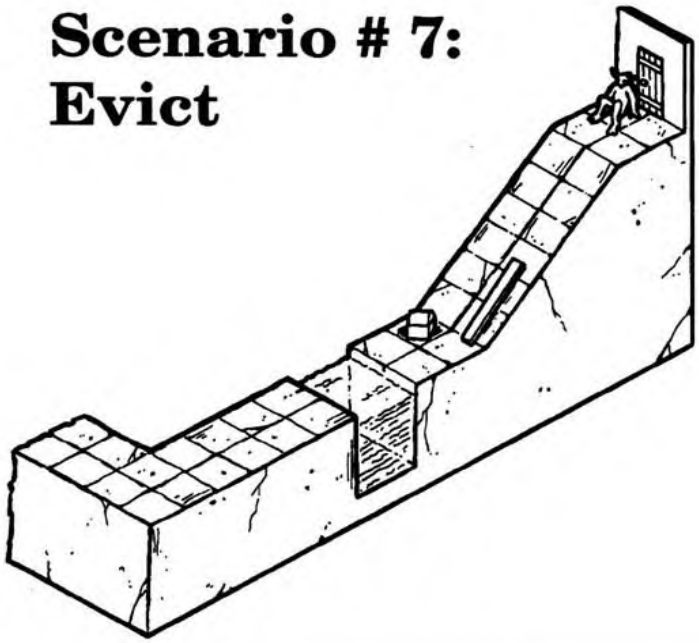
Read or paraphrase the following to begin the scenario:

> This scenario takes place in a small laboratory. Three tables are positioned against the walls; two of them hold five sealed glass aquariums, each filled with a different colored muck (bright green, drab green, golden brown, golden orange, and milky white) suspended in a liquid growth medium. The third table holds a notebook, a wooden spoon, a pencil, five rune-covered cards, and a sheet of paper.
>
> "This time your task is easy," states the proctor monitoring this scenario, a Guild priest named Parnival. "That door over there is the exit. You must go through it within 15 minutes of being locked in here, using only the contents of this room." He locks the door through which you entered the room, then turns to you and says, "Begin!"

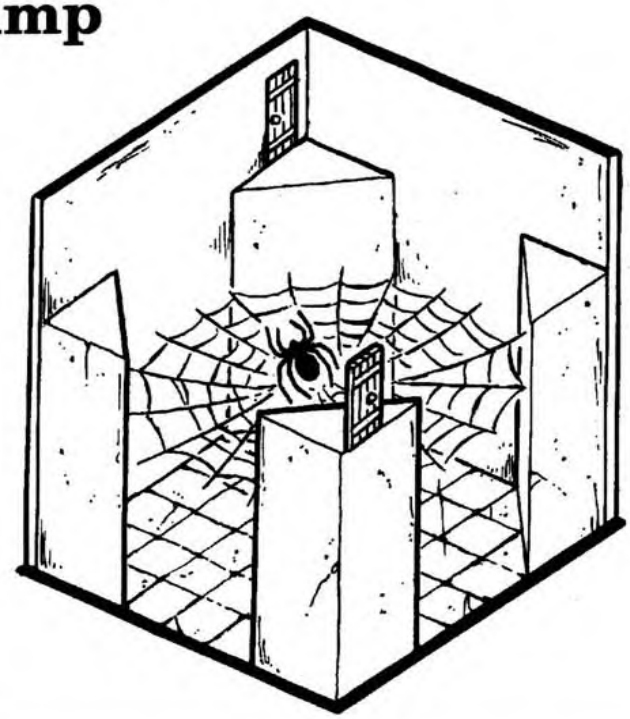
The room is lit by a *continual light* spell. The doors to the room both open outward, so there are no hinges inside the room. The exit door has a heavy padlock on it, locking the PCs in.

Scenario #6: Media

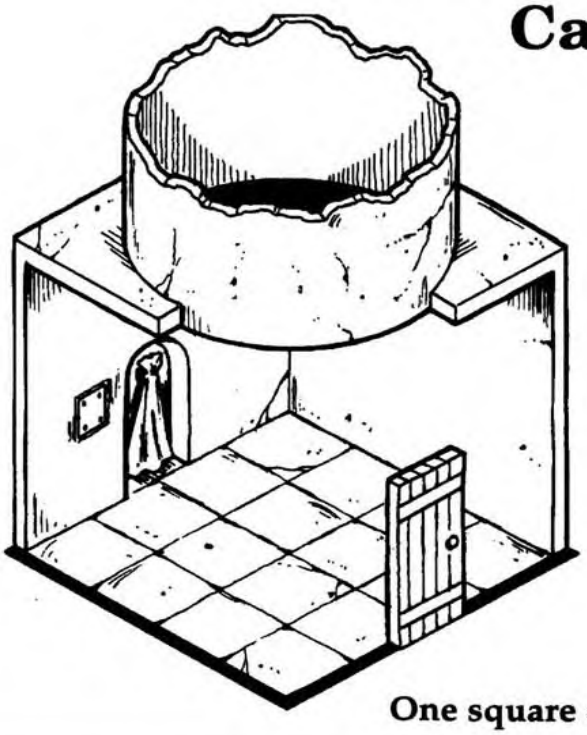
Scenario # 7: Evict



Scenario # 9: Imp



Scenario #10: Cape



One square = 2½ feet

DIM	CAPE	EVICT	FORMER
IMP	CYAN	MEDIA	HEARTH
	LEAD		
	TEES		

Cutout Words for Scenario #10 Handout

Template for Scenario #10 Handout

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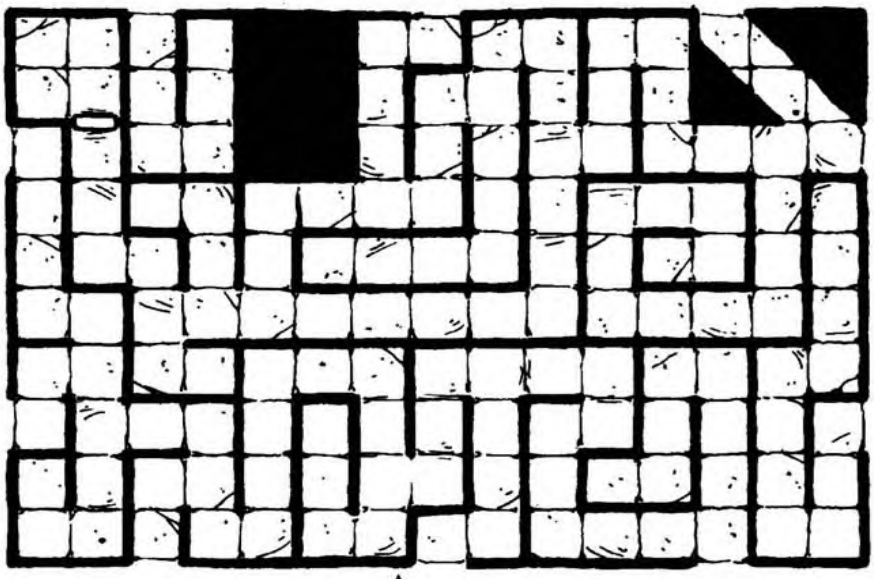
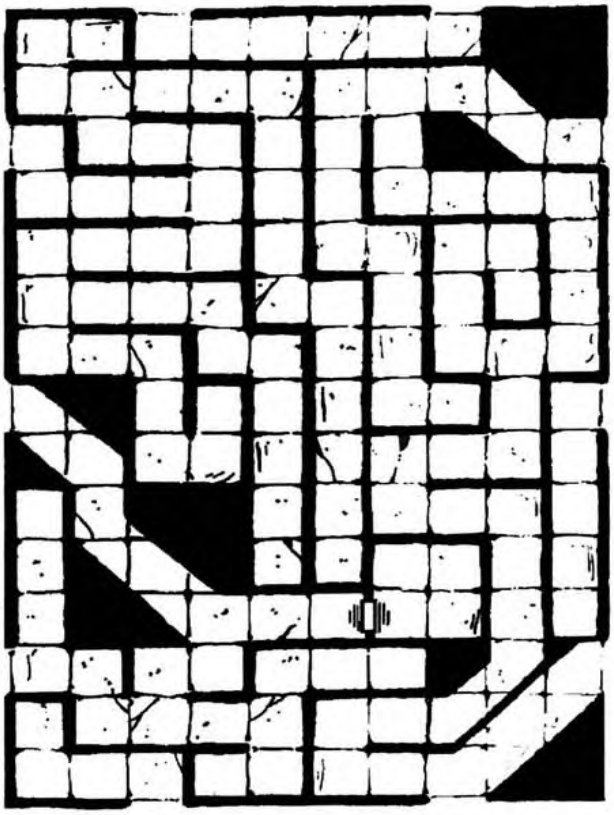
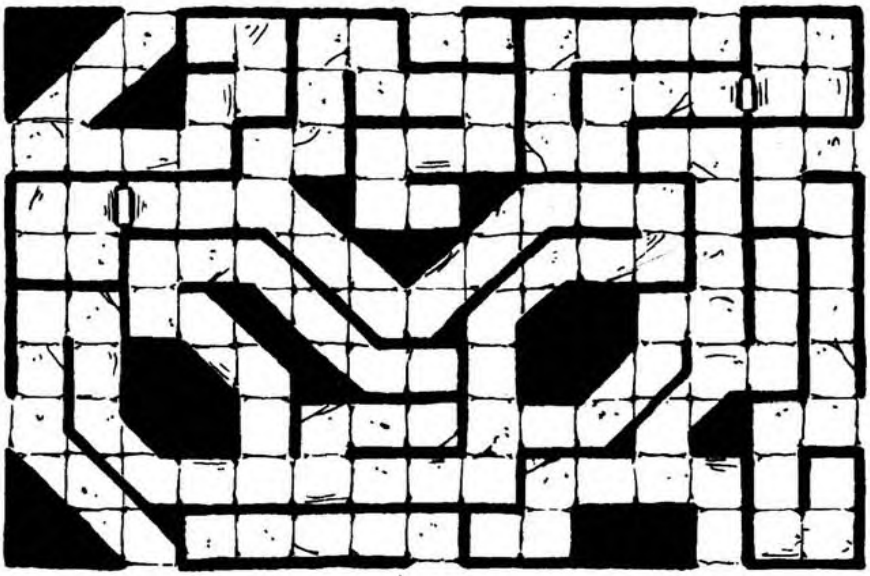


Scenario #8 Card A

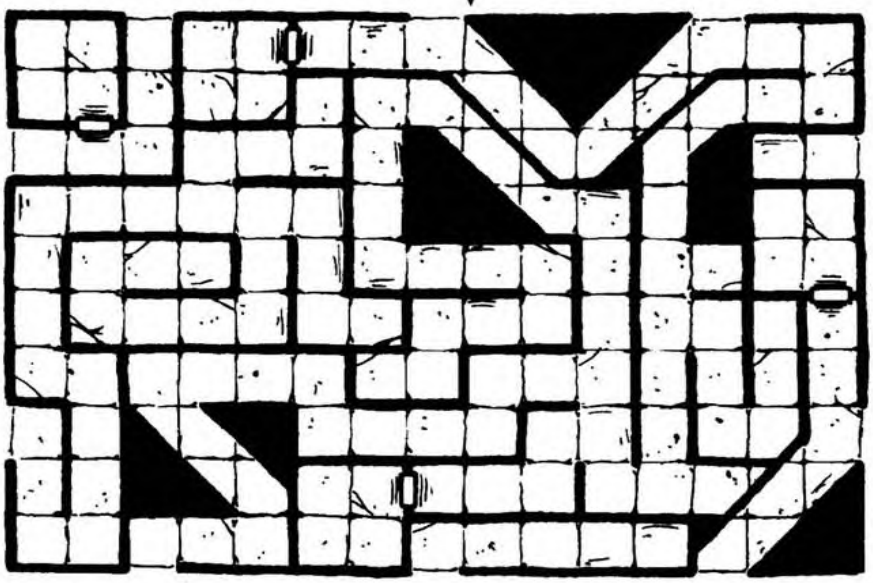


Scenario #8 Card D

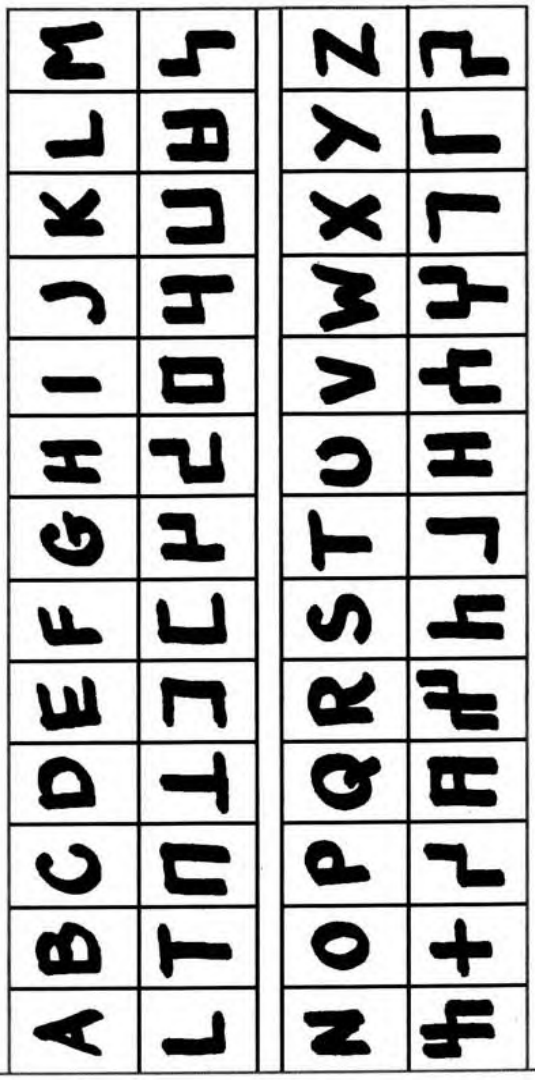


Scenario #8 Card B

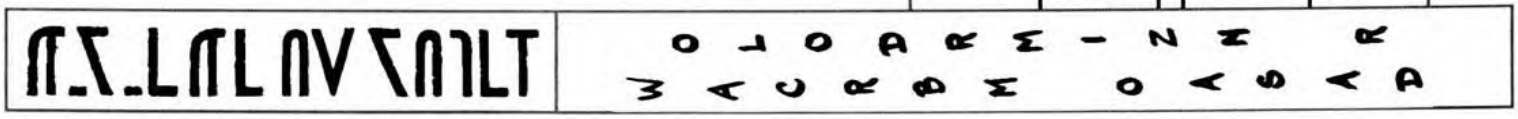
Scenario #8 Card C



Paper Strips for Scenario #1



Alphabet for Scenario #6 Handout



Scoring: 10 points per PC who makes it through the exit door within the 15-minute time limit.

Solution: The PCs examine the five cards and notice that they are each marked in code. The piece of paper shows the code system used. While three of the PCs decipher the coded names, the fourth PC looks up the descriptions of the creatures in the notebook as each name is called out. The details on the creatures include color descriptions, allowing the PCs to identify which aquarium contains which creature. Once all five have been identified and studied, the PCs carefully open the green slime container (the one with bright green muck inside) and use the wooden spoon to scoop some up. They drop the slime onto the lock, and in 2 rounds the slime eats through the lock. The PCs then exit the room.

DM Notes: This scenario requires the use of the *Monstrous Manual* tome, which is used to represent the "notebook" on the table. As the monster names are deciphered, one player should be looking up the names in the *Monstrous Manual*. (This won't be as easy as it sounds if they're not familiar with how the book's laid out, as the five creatures are not found under their own names but rather under the headings "Fungus," "Mold," and "Ooze/Slime/Jelly." The DM should offer no assistance in helping the players find the monsters, not even by suggesting that there might be an index in the back.) If the PCs open up the different aquariums, either accidentally or intentionally, the following occurs:

The **bright green** muck is green slime. Any PC touching it with something other than the wooden spoon is declared "dead."

The **drab green** substance is olive slime. Anyone touching it is declared "dead."

The **golden brown** muck is russet mold. All PCs within 3 feet of the container when it is opened are declared "dead."

The **golden orange** muck is yellow mold. All PCs in the room when the container is opened are declared "dead."

The **milky white** substance is actually a phycomid. It attacks, and the proctor casts *cure disease* as needed. Those requiring the spell are declared "dead."

The phycomid and slimes are the real thing. The molds are both simulated with some oatmeal and food dyes.

Green slime: AC 9; MV 0; HD 2; hp 6; THAC0 nil; #AT 1; Dmg special; SA turns flesh to green slime in 1–4 rounds; SZ S; ML nil; Int non (0); AL N; XP 65; *MM*/278–279 (ooze/slime/jelly).

Olive slime: AC 9; MV 0; HD 2+2; hp 8; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg special; SA special; SZ S; ML nil; Int non (0); AL N; XP 420; *MM*/276 (ooze/slime/jelly).

Phycomid: AC 5; MV 3; HD 5; hp 15; THAC0 15; #AT 2; Dmg 3–6/3–6; SA infection; SZ T; ML 14; Int non (0); AL N(E); XP 650; *MM*/120 (fungus).

Scenario #7: EVICT

Read or paraphrase the following to begin the scenario:

> **Exiting the door from Scenario #6, you turn a corner and see that the corridor continues for about 30 feet before becoming a pool of water. On the floor on the far side of the water is a 12'-long wooden board and a small wooden chest. The floor then slopes upward, leveling off for a stretch before ending at a wall with a door. In front of the door is a sleeping humanoid figure. Waves of heat shimmer from its red-hot body, which is split and cracked as if made of hardened lava.**
>
> **"The lava mephit prevents anyone from proceeding any farther," says Lydric, the Guild priest in charge of this scenario. "You'll have to evict him if you want safe passage. To aid you, here is a wizard's *ring of spell storing* containing the spells *grease* and the *chill shield* version of the *fire shield* spell." Lydric drops the *ring* into the wizard's hand. "Inside the chest you will find a loaf of bread, a *chime of opening*, and a *chime of hunger*. The *chimes* are marked to show which is which. This scenario serves as the wizard's test. If you are successful, wizard, you'll earn the *wizard's key*. You have 15 minutes. Begin!"**

The area is lit by a *continual light* spell. The pool of water is 10 feet wide, 10 feet long, and 10 feet deep. The chest is unlocked and measures 1' × 1' × 2'. The slope rises at a 40° angle from the floor. The door beyond the sleeping lava mephit is made of metal. The wizard's *fire shield* spell is the *chill shield* variety and causes a blue flame.

Scoring: 10 points per PC who makes it past the lava mephit and out the door within the 15-minute time limit. The wizard earns only 5 points if he or she fails to lead at least one other party member to safety.

Solution: A PC lowers himself or herself quietly into the water, swims to the other side, crawls up out of the pool, and extends the board across the pool. Lifting the chest, the PC walks back to the others, removing the board once he or she is safely across. He then opens the chest and removes the loaf of bread and the *chime of hunger*. Each PC breaks off a chunk of bread. The wizard casts the *chill shield* spell upon himself or herself, *grease* on the sloped floor, and activates the *chime of hunger*. This forces the PCs to begin eating the bread in their hands and also awakens the lava mephit. Once awakened, the angered mephit immediately heads for the PC holding the *chime of hunger*, slips down the *greased* slope and into the water, hardening instantly. The PCs use the board to cross to the other side of the water pool, the wizard deactivates the *grease* spell, and the four PCs exit via the door.

DM Notes: If the PCs do not each have a piece of bread in their hands when the *chime of hunger* is activated, they are magically compelled to attack the PC holding the *chime*. If the *chime of opening* is struck instead, the lava mephit wakes up but is not compelled to recklessly attack the PC holding the *chime*, and combat occurs normally (to the detriment of the unarmed and unarmored PCs).

If the board is in place across the pool or the chest is still on the far side of the pool when the mephit is awakened by the *chime of hunger*, there's a 30% chance he'll grab onto the board or chest and thus prevent himself from falling into the water. When the mephit slides down the slope, anyone on his side of the pool must make a successful Dexterity check (at a +4 bonus) to avoid being knocked in with him. Once the lava mephit is in the water, the intense heat radiating from its body causes the water to boil, so any PC falling into the water from that point on is declared "dead." This normally shouldn't be a problem unless the wizard forgets to "shut off" the *grease* spell before the PCs try climbing the slope. If a PC tries climbing up the *greased* incline, the chance of success is determined by adding the PC's Strength, Dexterity, and Movement Rate together and dividing the total by 40. Thus a human with 12 in both Strength and Dexterity has a (12 + 12 + 12)/40 = 90% chance of making it up the slope, while a dwarf with the same ability scores has a (12 + 12 + 6)/40 = 75% chance.

The wizard should open the door, since the metal is still hot from contact with the lava mephit. (Anyone touching the hot metal door without the benefit of a *chill shield* spell is penalized 5 points for poor judgment.) Optionally, the *chime of opening* can be used. If the wizard is successful in "evicting" the lava mephit, he or she is given the *wizard's key*, which can be worn in subsequent scenarios.

Lava mephit: AC 6; MV 12, fly 24 (B); HD 3; hp 12; THAC0 17; #AT 2; Dmg 1/1; SA 1d8 points of heat damage upon touch; SA none used in this encounter; SZ M (5' tall); ML 10; Int average (8); AL NE; XP 175; *MM*/202 (imp, mephit—modified).

The "lava mephit" is actually a Guild wizard under the effects of a *polymorph self* spell. The heat on the door is the result of a *heat metal* spell, and the water "boils" courtesy of an illusion.

Scenario #8: DIM

Read or paraphrase the following to begin the scenario:

> You climb a flight of stairs and pass through a trap door into a small 10' × 10' room with a single door on one wall. There you are met by three Guild wizards and a friendly Guild priest who introduces himself as Father Quespin. "I'd like a volunteer," says Quespin, barely containing a smile.

Once a volunteer steps forward, Father Quespin drops a magical item into the PC's hand, at which point the briefing continues:

> "This is a *gem of brilliance*," he explains. "Its higher functions have been used up, but it still serves as a useful light source. Now then, I'd like each of you to take a card."
>
> Quespin holds out four cards, face down, and allows each of you to take one. "Don't look at them yet," he cautions, then motions to the Guild wizards. Each of them takes one of the other three competitors and *teleports* away, leaving the volunteer and Father Quespin standing alone.
>
> "Each of your companions has been *teleported* to a locked room inside a vast maze," explains the priest. "It is your job to find them and locate the hidden door out of the maze. The trap door by which you entered this room does not count; in fact, it's already been sealed on the other side.
>
> "Each of you holds one-fourth of the map to the maze. By placing them together correctly, you'll have the whole layout, so it shouldn't be too difficult to find your way around, eh? Oh, one final thing: I advise you to stick together, for the maze is inhabited by a tunnel wraith that enjoys picking off stragglers in the dark. Safety in numbers, and all that. Best of luck to you! You may begin!" And with that he opens the only door to the room, exposing a narrow tunnel beyond.

The illumination provided by the *gem of brightness* extends 10 feet and works like a modern-day flashlight. The gem has no other powers. The maze has a ceiling height of 10 feet and is unlit throughout. The cards given to the PCs are provided on page 49; the DM should photocopy them, cut them out, and distribute them among the four players. Each square on the maze map equals 5 feet.

Scoring: 10 points per PC who makes it through the hidden maze exit within the 15-minute time limit.

Solution: As the four cards were randomly distributed, the volunteer PC might or might not have the card showing his or her starting location. The PC must therefore explore the maze on his or her own until another PC is found. Each time another PC is found, that PC's map piece becomes available, and as the PCs gain in number they will eventually have access to all four pieces of the maze map. Once they have determined the correct placement of the four map pieces, a shaded "arrow" shows the location of the secret door leading out of the maze. (See the above diagram for the correct placement of the map pieces and the location of the secret exit.)

DM Notes: The volunteer PC begins in the room marked "V" on the DM's map of the maze. The other PCs begin in the rooms marked "PC1," "PC2," and "PC3" respectively. (The DM should randomly determine which PC is in each room before starting the scenario, as it can affect the PCs' scores if not all of them are found in time to exit the maze.) Each of these three other rooms are barred from the outside. The volunteer PC can easily open the door from outside the room, but the PC inside cannot get out on his or her own. The interiors of each of these three rooms has been magically *silenced*, preventing sounds

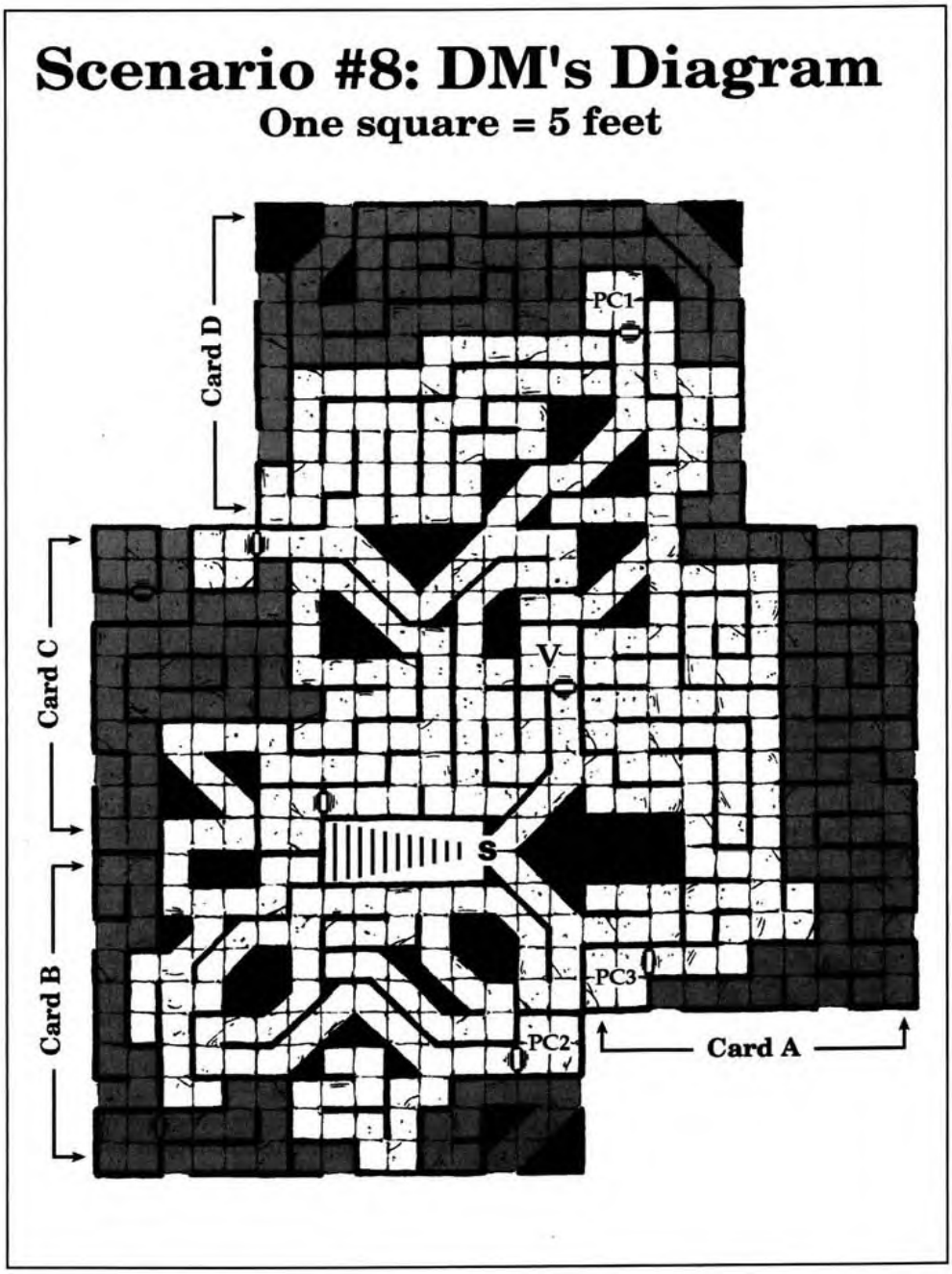


Table 2: Team Results

	Team Scores (by scenario)										
Team Name	**#1**	**#2**	**#3**	**#4**	**#5**	**#6**	**#7**	**#8**	**#9**	**#10**	**Total**
Three of Four*	40	40	0	40	40	40	40	40	0	40	320
Rock Gnomes	40	20	40	40	40	0	40	40	40	0	300
Dragonfighters	40	40	40	0	40	40	30	30	0	35	295
Shieldbreakers**	40	40	40	40	40	20	30	0	40	0	290
Knightmares**	40	40	40	0	40	40	0	40	40	0	280
Four Horsemen**	40	30	40	40	30	20	40	40	0	0	280
Omega Squad	40	40	30	40	10	40	40	30	0	0	270
Dangermen**	40	30	0	10	40	30	40	40	0	30	260
A-Team**	0	40	0	40	40	40	40	40	0	0	240
Mapletown Brigade**	0	40	10	40	40	20	40	0	40	0	230
War Dogs**	40	30	0	40	20	10	40	0	0	0	180
Roustabouts**	0	40	30	0	40	10	0	0	0	0	120
Guttertrash	0	20	0	40	10	10	40	0	0	0	120
Bjolgar's Berserkers**	0	20	0	0	40	10	40	0	0	0	110
Bisquayne's Army	40	20	0	0	40	0	0	0	0	0	100

* So named because three of the four adventurers are dwarves.
** These teams are part of the betting pool.

from emanating into or out of the rooms. (Thus, the PCs cannot help the volunteer find them by shouting from the room.) The rooms are each lit with *continual light* spells, but these provide only a dim light similar to that of a *faerie fire* spell.

The DM and volunteer PC must talk their way through the scenario. Here's a sample dialogue:

> **DM**: "You exit the starting room and go straight for 15 feet. You may now turn left or veer off diagonally right."
>
> **PC**: "I turn left."
>
> **DM**: "After 5 feet, you must turn right. After 5 more feet, you must turn left. After 15 feet, you may turn either left or right."
>
> **PC**: "I go right."
>
> **DM**: "After 10 feet, you must turn left. After 10 more feet, you can turn either left or right ..."

Talking through every twist and turn of the maze not only provides the player with a mental image of the route the PC is taking but simulates the time it takes to traverse the unlit corridors. As the PCs have nothing with which to write down notes, the DM should not allow the players to make notes to themselves or draw out parts of the maze. They must work it out themselves by studying their portions of the maze map.

The four maze map cards were made so they can be connected together many different ways. Because of the symmetrical orientation of the ten passageways "off" of each card, players might assume that the cards must be aligned symmetrically as well. This, of course, is not the case. In addition, several short passages are repeated more than one time in different parts of the maze, making it difficult for the players to find their exact location without all four of the cards.

Any PC who decides to split off from the rest of the party and go it alone (and in the dark) is declared "dead" once he or she is out of sight of the others—a victim of the tunnel wraith. After all, the PCs were warned ahead of time, and venturing alone and weaponless in a dark labyrinth known to be inhabited by a terrible monster is not a wise move in the eyes of the Adventurers' Guild. (In addition, this prevents the harried DM from having to track two or more parties as they make their ways through different parts of the twisted maze!)

If the PCs fail to make it out of the maze within 15 minutes, a Guild proctor finds them and leads them out. There is no "tunnel wraith" in the maze, but that doesn't stop the DM from adding the occasional "haunted moan" or "soul-shriveling shriek" from the other side of a wall (courtesy of an *audible glamer* spell, of course) once or twice during the scenario for atmosphere.

PCs who determine the correct location of the secret exit have no trouble finding and opening it. Beyond the secret door is a 10'-wide stone stairway that leads up to the next scenario.

Scenario #9: IMP

Read or paraphrase the following to begin the scenario:

> A Guild priestess named Marilyssa greets you at the start of the ninth scenario.
>
> "Beyond this door you will find a 35' × 35' room with another door on the far side. You must exit through the far door within 15 minutes. However, the floor you'll be standing on is actually only a triangular ledge 20 feet above the actual floor. To further complicate matters, an imp in the form of a large spider sleeps in the middle of room. Wake him, and he'll attack."
>
> Handing a 10'-long partisan to the warrior, Marilyssa says, "Here. You might need this. In addition, here are four potion vials. One holds one dose of a potion of *growth*. The others are potions of *treasure finding*. The warrior has a chance to earn his *warrior's key* during this scenario. I wish all of you the best of luck. Begin!"

The room is lit by a *continual light* spell. The room is 30 feet high; 10 feet above the floor is a giant spider web, while 20 feet above the floor are four triangular ledges, each 10 feet long on their shortest sides. There is a 15' gap between each of the ledges. A large spider can be seen in the middle of the web. The partisan is a polearm with a 10'-long wooden shaft. All four potion vials seem identical; both types of potion are clear, like water.

Scoring: 10 points per PC who makes it out the exit door within the 15-minute time limit. The warrior earns only 5 points if he or she fails to lead at least one other party member to safety.

Solution: One PC takes the partisan in hand and drinks a potion. If it's the potion of *growth*, the PC doubles in size, as does the polearm. Otherwise, the PC passes the partisan to another PC who drinks the contents of the next vial, and this continues until a PC finally drinks the potion of *growth* while holding the partisan. The PCs then take the 20'-long partisan and places it along the edge of the wall between the starting platform and one of the adjacent platforms. One PC steadies it while another walks along its length to the far side; the first PC to cross then steadies it from that end while the second and third PCs cross. The fourth PC crosses with the partisan being steadied only at the far end. Once all four have made it across, they slide the partisan over to the far platform and cross in the same manner.

DM Notes: If a PC drinks the potion of *growth* without holding the partisan, this scenario is just about finished, as its success hinges on the PCs realizing that they need to *enlarge* the partisan. In fact, that's the only reason the three other potions are given to the PCs: to tempt them to each drink a potion simultaneously, in which case there's only a 25% chance that the PC drinking the actual potion of *growth* is holding the partisan. In addition, a potion of *treasure finding* becomes a deadly poison if mixed with any other potion. (See Table 111: Potion Compatibility in the *DUNGEON MASTER Guide*.) As a result, anyone drinking more than one potion is immediately declared "dead" by Marilyssa (although the "potions of *treasure finding*" in this scenario are, in actuality, drinking water.)

A Dexterity check must be made by each PC walking along the partisan. If only one end is being held (as is the case for the first and last PCs making the crossing), no bonus applies to the roll. If both ends are being held, the check is made with a +4 bonus. Anyone falling to the web below suffers no damage but wakes up the imp. The same holds true if anything touches the web (like if the PCs try cutting the web loose from the wall with the partisan). It takes 1 round per point of Strength under 19 to break free of the web, during which time the spider-imp can bite for 1 point of damage plus force a saving throw vs. poison or cause 15 extra points of damage after a 15-minute onset time. Attacking the spider in any way (throwing the partisan at it like a spear, for example) causes the creature to revert to its normal imp form and attack. First it uses its *suggestion* ability to compel the PCs to leap into the webbing, then it attacks with its scorpionlike tail. Unlike normal imps, this one's tail causes paralysis. At the end of this scenario, antidotes for the spider poison and paralytic imp venom are made available to those PCs needing it. In addition, the PC who drank the potion of *growth* is returned to normal size.

PCs with the Jumping proficiency can try leaping across the gap between two ledges. Note that the ledges are too small to allow a running start; jumping is limited to 1d6 plus half the PC's level in feet. (The distance is doubled for the *enlarged* PC.) Nonproficient jumpers simply end up in the web if they try leaping the gap, as do proficient jumpers whose die rolls indicate a distance of less than 15 feet.

If the warrior makes it to the exit successfully with at least one other party member, he is given his *warrior's key*. The key may be worn in the tenth scenario.

Imp: AC 2 (8 in spider form); MV 6, fly 18 (A) (web 12 in spider form); HD 2+2; hp 12; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg 1–4 (1 in spider form); SA poison, *suggestion* once/day (imp form only); SD turn invisible at will; SZ S; Int average (10); AL LE; XP 1,400; *MM*/201.

As usual, the spider-imp is really a *polymorphed* Guild wizard.

Table 3: Individual Scores

Team Name	Warrior	Wizard	Priest	Rogue
Three of Four	**80**	**80**	**80**	**80**
Rock Gnomes	70	**80**	70	**80**
Dragonfighters	**80**	70	70	75
Shieldbreakers	70	70	70	**80**
Knightmares	70	70	70	70
Four Horsemen	70	60	**80**	70
Omega Squad	60	70	70	70
Dangermen	60	70	70	60
A-Team	60	60	60	60
Mapletown Brigade	50	50	60	70
War Dogs	40	30	50	60
Roustabouts	20	30	30	40
Guttertrash	40	20	20	40
Bjolgar's Berserkers	30	20	20	40
Bisquayne's Army	30	20	20	30

Numbers in **bold** indicate the highest scores of a character class.

Scenario #10: CAPE

Before beginning this scenario, the DM should ensure that the party's Score Sheet has been updated. Read or paraphrase the following to begin the scenario:

You are led to the door outside the tenth and final scenario and greeted by a Guild wizard named Scarrolupio. "Well, you've made it this far," he says. "I imagine you're wondering how you're doing. Here, see for yourself."

He hands you a sheet of paper, on which your score has been recorded by scenario. He also passes out the appropriate keys to those who failed to earn them in their respective scenarios. "Now then, shall we tackle the final problem?"

Scarrolupio leads you through the door into a 10' × 10' room. Centered on the 10'-high ceiling is an 8'-diameter shaft leading to the surface 35 feet above you. Immediately in front of you, across from the door, is a recessed cubbyhole displaying a black cape hanging on a peg. "That is a *cape of useful items*," remarks Scarrolupio. "You might find it helpful in climbing out of this pit. However, the *cape* is blocked by an invisible *wall of force* that must be deactivated by pulling the lever concealed behind this panel." The Guild wizard indicates a metal panel built into the wall on the left of the *wall of force*. "I will point out several things about the panel. First, notice the four keyholes in the corners. As you might suspect, it takes all four keys to open the panel. Go ahead, place your keys in position. Now then, try to turn them."

You insert the keys and try to turn them, but they do not budge.

"Oh, I almost forgot," says the wizard. "There is a magical code phrase that must be spoken aloud before your keys will turn. Note the rectangular indentations on the panel. You must place these"—here he pulls a stack of ten magnetic rectangular strips from a pocket in his robes, each strip bearing the name of one of the ten scenarios—"in the correct order, forming a proper sentence. When the correct sentence is spoken aloud, the keys will turn, enabling you to deactivate the *wall of force*, and the wizard may use the *cape of useful items* to aid you in climbing out of the shaft. Well then, if there are no further questions, you have 15 minutes! Begin!"

This room is illuminated by a *continual light* spell and residual daylight filtering down through the hole in the ceiling.

Scoring: 10 points per PC who exits the shaft within the 15-minute time limit.

Solution: The PCs form the proper sentence by putting the titles of the ten scenarios together and then breaking them up into different words. Thus, "HEARTH EVICT IMP LEAD FORMER CYAN DIM MEDIA TEES CAPE" becomes "HEAR THE VICTIM PLEAD FOR MERCY AND IMMEDIATE ESCAPE." If a PC utters that sentence aloud, the keys can be turned, allowing the PCs to open the panel, pull the lever, deactivate the *wall of force*, and gain access to the *cape of useful items*. The wizard PC dons the *cape* and pulls off the following patches: the 24'-long ladder, a 50'-long coil of rope, and the 10'-long wooden pole. The PCs tie one end of the rope to the middle of the pole. Then, while three PCs steady the ladder, the fourth PC takes the pole and climbs the ladder to the top. He throws the pole like a spear out the top of the shaft, then pulls the rope tight until the pole straddles the hole. The PCs then take turns climbing up the rope and out of the shaft.

Cape of Useful Items

The cape has the following six magical patches attached to it:

10'-long pole
Lantern
Large sack
50'-long coil of rope
24'-long wooden ladder
Dagger

DM Notes: The magnetic strips with the ten scenario names are different lengths, depending upon the length of the word. This limits the possible places each word can be placed to form the correct sentence. The DM should photocopy the Scenario #10 Cutout Words and Template on page 48. Once the PCs have placed the words in the correct order, they must still pronounce the new sentence correctly, reading the new words "formed" instead of the title names. Simply reading the titles aloud has no effect.

Once the PCs gain access to the *cape of useful items*, the DM should give the wizard PC's player the list of magical patches available on the *cape* (listed below). The *cape of useful items* is otherwise identical to the *robe of useful items* detailed in the *DUNGEON MASTER Guide*.

When the PCs climb out of the shaft, they find themselves on display before a cheering audience. They are then led to a tent by a Guild proctor, who briefs them on their final score and advises them not to discuss the specifics of the ten scenarios with anyone, as there are still several teams that have yet to begin the scenarios.

Concluding the Adventure

Once the PCs have finished all ten scenarios, their scores are tallied, both as individuals and as a team. To compare the results of the other teams, consult Tables 2 and 3. In the event of a tie between two or more participants in a single class, the winners are ranked in order of their team's overall scores.

Those PCs who earned their keys in the course of the Challenge of Champions are allowed to keep them. Furthermore, the top three winners of each PC class have their keys etched by *wizard mark* spells "1st," "2nd," or "3rd," as appropriate, to show their rankings among all of the contestants. Each key is worth about 1 gp, perhaps more to a collector. They have no magical properties. Each member of the winning team also receives a "brass sprite" trophy engraved with his or her name, the team name, year, and "Challenge of Champions III" along with the Adventurers' Guild crest. (The "sprite" trophy has become an Adventurers' Guild tradition, dating back to the "gem sprite" trophy of the original contest.) Its value is about 50 gp.

The members of the winning team also receive a lifetime membership in the Adventurers' Guild. However, there are other less tangible benefits to having participated in the Third Annual Challenge of Champions. Since the Adventurers' Guild keeps records on everyone who enters the contest, those who did particularly well might be asked to join future Guild expeditions. The Guild is always looking for an extra adventurer able to pull his or her own weight. (This can be an easy way for the DM to draw the PCs into further adventures.) In addition, some of the other competitors might very well end up as close friends or possibly even party members (or hated rivals!) as a result of their meeting with the PCs during the contest.

After all of the teams have completed the contest and the Guild officials have had a chance to tally up the results, everyone is gathered before the grandstand, where Farthingale begins the awards ceremony. He calls the wizards up first, beginning with the one who earned third place honors, then second place, and finally first place. Each is given a *wizard's key* engraved with his or her standing. Then the wizards step down and are replaced by the top three winners among the warriors, followed in turn by the priests and the rogues. Finally, the overall winning team is announced. As Farthingale calls the team up to the stand, applause rips through the audience. Four "brass sprite" trophies are passed out to the winning teammates, and congratulations are made all around.

At that point the contest is officially over, and the celebration begins in earnest. Vast amounts of food and drink are consumed, musicians and entertainers are kept busy until the wee hours of the night, and the Thieves Guild is kept hard at work overseeing the payment of the numerous bets placed on the various competitors. Happy fans surround the contestants, begging for details about their experiences, and bards each try to be the first to come up with a really good song describing the adventure. Amid all of the carousing, Farthingale is seen conferring with several Guild scribes, jotting down scenario ideas for the next year's Challenge of Champions. Ω

by Aaron Williams

Nodwick in:
CHALLENGE OF CHAMPIONS
or "Games PC's Play"
CHALLENGE #2: "TEES"
SO, WE CAN'T SWIM ACROSS OR WE'LL GET EATEN, AND ONE "FLYING CARPET" IS TRAPPED...
AND THE ROPES ARE COATED WITH POISON!
POISON? WHY DIDN'T YOU SAY SO?
NOW WE CAN UNRAVEL THE CARPETS, WEAVE SOME NEW ROPE, THEN USE NODWICK AS A GRAPPLING HOOK...
WEREN'T THOSE SHARKS REALLY GUILD WIZARDS IN DISG--
SHH!
CHALLENGE #3: "LEAD"
GOOD JOB FINDING THE SILVER KEY!
OH, IT'S NOTHING ANY GOOD "ROGUE" COULDN'T HAVE ACCOMPLISHED.
WHAT WAS IT LIKE BEING ABLE TO SEE WITH X-RAY VISION?
EDUCATIONAL. FOR EXAMPLE, I LEARNED THAT THEY'LL START STRIP-SEARCHING THE TEAMS WHEN THEY FIND OUT WHAT YEAGAR SMUGGLED INTO THE CONTEST!
THOSE HACKSAWS ARE FAMILY HEIRLOOMS!
CHALLENGE #4: "CYAN"
BUT, THE POTION TURNED YOU BLUE! YOU SHOULD'VE BEEN INVISIBLE TO THE MONSTER! HOW--?
I FORGOT TO TAKE OUT MY GREEN CONTACTS...
CHALLENGE #7: "EVICT"
OKAY, I RING THE CHIME OF HUNGER, THE LAVA MEPHIT TAKES A BATH, AND WE SCORE SOME EASY POINTS. READY?
Z
CHIME
SEEING AS YOUR ONLY OTHER COURSE OF ACTION WOULD'VE BEEN TO ATTACK ME, I COMMEND YOU ON YOUR SELF-CONTROL.
MMPH!
WE'VE ONLY GOT TWO MINUTES LEFT TO SOLVE THIS WORD PUZZLE! THINK, PEOPLE!
IT DOESN'T HELP THAT YEAGAR KEEPS TRYING TO SPELL DIRTY WORDS!
IT'S TIME TO PLAY HARDBALL...
CHALLENGE #10: "CAPE"
YO! GUILD JUDGES! I'D ADVISE LETTING MY COLLEAGUES OUT, OR THEY'RE LIABLE TO COME UP WITH ANOTHER CREATIVE SOLUTION!
LATER...
THEN IT'S AGREED: WE DECLARE YOU THE WINNERS AND DON'T PRESS CHARGES, AND YOU GUYS SWEAR TO NEVER COMPETE IN THIS EVENT AGAIN!
WE WIN!
SOMEHOW, I DON'T THINK WE'LL GET ANY ATHLETIC ENDORSEMENTS OUT OF THIS...

www.nodwick.com

BY FELIX DOUGLAS

Artwork by Brian Despain

Cartography by Sam Wood & Chris Perkins

"Sarfion's Collection" is a short AD&D® scenario designed for 3–5 characters of levels 7–10 (about 32 total levels). At least one character should be a wizard, and the party would benefit from having at least one warrior. Although set in the GREYHAWK® campaign setting, the adventure adapts easily to any campaign.

Adventure Background

The town of Hardby, located south of Greyhawk City and west of the Abbor-Alz on the Woolly Bay coast, has long been a haven for adventurers and fortune-hunters who seek to plunder the nearby dungeons, ruins, and cairns. Consequently, the town has also spawned numerous businesses and organizations dedicated to adventurers: thieves' guilds, outfitting shops, magic shops (where wizards can purchase spell components and volumes of arcane lore), brotherhoods (for priests), adventurers' guilds, and training schools (for warriors), to name a few.

Six months ago, a new academy for wizards opened in the southern district near the coast. Owned and operated by a wizard named Kren Sarfion, the Hardby Academy of the Arcane Arts offers assistance to able wizards, a rich library of tomes and scrolls, and free identification of magical items. Sarfion employs scribes to copy spells and create scrolls for wizards in need, in particular spells that are difficult to find elsewhere.

The Academy of the Arcane Arts is more than it seems, however. Years ago, while experimenting with magic beyond even his control, Sarfion opened a *gate* to the Far Realm, a dimension where the fabric of time and space is twisted. His intrusion quickly caught the attention of the neh-thalggu, hideously bloated creatures with tentacle-covered bodies, tooth-filled maws, and crab-like legs. Known on the Prime Material plane as brain collectors, neh-thalggu swallow the brains of their victims, housing them in body cavities and using the brains to enhance their spellcasting ability.

Hoping to gain further insight into the mysterious Far Realm—and to preserve his own life—Sarfion offered to provide the neh-thalggu with the brains they needed.

Every month, a neh-thalggu leaves the Far Realm and enters the Academy through the *gate* on the second floor. Sarfion uses his position as Director to lure hapless wizards into the brain collector's clutches. Once a neh-thalggu has devoured twelve brains, it returns to the Far Realm and is replaced by another brain collector. Thus, Sarfion must provide a steady supply of brains. Once the neh-thalggu has extracted what it wants from a victim, Sarfion feeds the remains to his maggot golem, which neatly disposes of the corpse.

Luckily, the Academy's membership is large enough to accommodate Sarfion's needs. He almost always selects members who aren't residents of Hardby, since they aren't likely to be missed by anyone in town. When questioned about the disappearances, Sarfion reveals that the missing persons left the academy via magical means, claiming he hasn't seen them since. Sarfion sells *teleport* and *dimension door* scrolls for this reason, and his *ring of mind shielding* protects him from *ESP* and similar mind-probing spells.

SARFION'S COLLECTION

Prolonged exposure to the Far Realm has rendered Sarfion insane. He demonstrates neither remorse nor passion for his "work." He intends to continue providing brain donors for the neh-thalggu until his exploration of the Far Realm is complete. Sarfion's employees realize that something is amiss, but they are too frightened of Sarfion's magic to question his behavior.

Adventure Hooks

The adventure can begin in one of several ways, depending on the DM's campaign. Below are some suggestions:

☛ The PCs are planning to explore a nearby ruins. The PC wizard decides to visit the Academy to procure some much needed scrolls or to research a new spell. After Sarfion tries to convince the PC to become a full-fledged member, a scribe working at the Academy warns the PC to stay away for his or her own sake!

☛ The PCs come to Hardby expecting to meet a wizard, but no one has seen the mage since he visited the Academy of the Arcane Arts to reference some books on tanar'ri one week ago. The PCs decide to investigate.

☛ The PCs learn from a local alchemist or mage that the Academy of the Arcane Arts reportedly contains a magical *gate* that leads to other planes of existence. Any PCs wishing to avail themselves of the gate can inquire at the Academy.

The DM doesn't need to reveal Sarfion's activities immediately. Party wizards might visit the Academy several times—perhaps as paying members—before they uncover its terrible secret.

The Academy of the Arcane Arts

The Academy is a well-maintained, wooden building with two floors. Most of the ground floor is dominated by the library and scriptorium. The second floor contains Sarfion's private quarters, the wizard's private library and study, a classroom (where Sarfion brings unsuspecting "brain donors"), and a secret room for the neh-thalggu.

Unless otherwise noted, all rooms inside the Academy are illuminated with *continual light* spells; their brightness can be increased or reduced by Sarfion with a simple verbal command. Doors leading to the scriptorium and main library as well as all upstairs doors are *wizard locked*. (From dusk to dawn, the main entrance is also *wizard locked*.) Sarfion can open any door without triggering the *wizard lock*, and the scribes can open any of the doors on the ground floor. Windows are *wizard locked*, *glassteeled*, and warded with *sepia snake sigils*.

The Academy employs four scribes who reside elsewhere in Hardby. Sarfion has cast *gaes* spells on the scribes, forbidding them from discussing any aspect of the Academy (including Sarfion's peculiar behavior) beyond the Academy's walls. If cornered outside and questioned about Sarfion or the strange disappearances, the scribes cannot convey any information, even if *charmed*. Their minds can be read using spells such as *ESP*, however. A *gaes* can be dispelled; otherwise, only another *gaes* spell (or a *wish* spell) allows the scribes to speak freely. Note that the *gaes* spells are inactive when the scribes are inside the Academy; only their fear of Sarfion's wrath keeps them in check, but that is usually enough.

Each scribe is a wizard's apprentice with the ability to cast *copy* once per day.

Eolar, Finn, Malfias, and Nejil, human males W1 (scribes): AC 10; MV 12; hp 3 each; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; SZ M; ML 6; Int very (12); AL LN; unarmed.

Gaining Membership

Anyone can visit the Academy to consult with Sarfion, pay for his spellcasting services, and buy potions and scrolls. However, only Academy members can avail themselves of Sarfion's magnificent library and receive generous discounts on scroll prices. The cost for membership is 50 gp for one year. One can buy a lifetime membership for 500 gp. (Of course, some lifetimes are alarmingly short!)

Sarfion reserves the right to deny membership to anyone he doesn't like. He also requires that all new members subject themselves to a *gaes* spell that prevents them from casting spells inside the Academy. Sarfion claims the spell is necessary to protect the Academy and its contents, but he also wants to insure that he remains unchallenged.

Academy Encounter Key

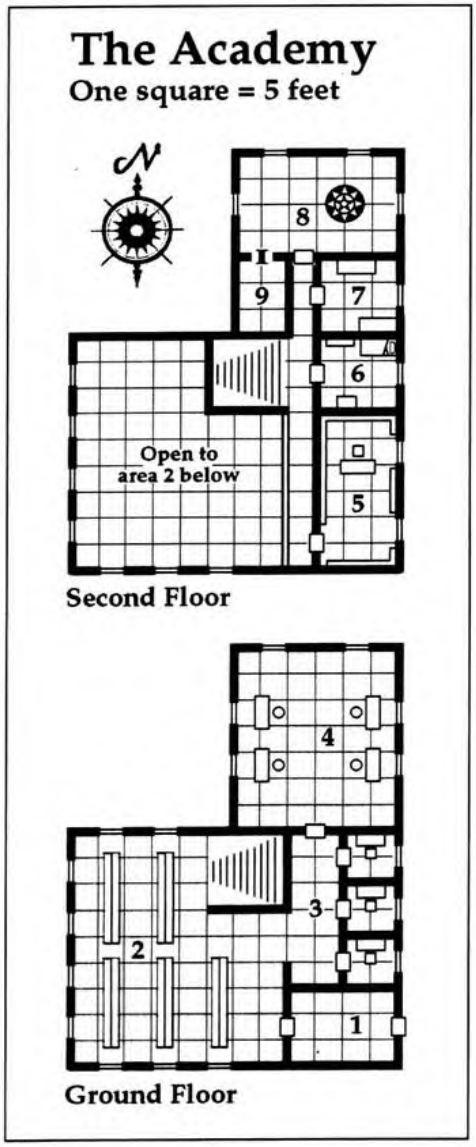
1. Entrance Foyer. This unremarkable hall has wood-paneled walls adorned with letters and certificates of endorsement from various wizards (both notable and obscure) throughout the Flanaess, including a few wizards known in Greyhawk City. A brown carpet stretches from the entrance to the door leading to the library (area **2**).

Nailed to the library door is a piece of parchment. If the PCs investigate, show them the handout below.

2. Main Library. Neatly organized on tall wooden bookshelves are hundreds of tomes covering various subjects, most of them useful to wizards. Subjects include alchemy, astrology, astronomy, botany, cartography, chemistry, cryptography, engineering, folklore, geology, history, languages, mathematics, planar lore, meteorology, myconology, physics, and zoology. Sarfion has acquired tomes from all over the Flanaess and has the largest collection of books in Hardby.

Only Academy members are allowed to peruse the books in the library. PCs are not allowed to read books in the library; those wishing to read must use one of the reading rooms (area **3**).

Every book in the library radiates magic, as Sarfion has engraved each one with a hidden rune. (A *detect magic* or successful Find



Traps roll reveals the rune. Only a successful *dispel magic* or Remove Traps roll can safely remove the rune.) Removing a book from the Academy without first disabling the protective rune triggers a modified *explosive runes* spell, inflicting 6d4+6 points of damage to all within 10 feet. The person carrying the book receives no saving throw; otherwise, a successful saving throw reduces damage by half.

A 15'-wide staircase climbs to the second floor. A *silent alarm* spell cast on the middle stair warns Sarfion when someone is heading up to the second floor.

3. Reading Rooms. Each of these small rooms contains a wooden desk and padded wooden chair. Those who wish to peruse books from the library can do so here.

4. Scriptorium. Four desks with stools are arranged about this well-lit chamber. The desks are covered with blank scrolls, ink jars, quills, and portions of illuminated manuscript. Sarfion's four scribes spend 8 hours each day copying scrolls and books for Academy members and other clients.

Beneath each scribe's desk is a shelf containing additional sheets of parchment as well as various colored inks and quills.

5. Private Library. This room holds Sarfion's private collection of tomes, including spellbooks taken from wizards slain by the neh-thalggu. There are more than a dozen such spellbooks, each of them trapped with *avoidance* and *explosive runes* spells cast by Sarfion. The DM should determine the contents of each book. Note that several of the books might contain spells hidden by *illusionary script* or *secret page* spells.

Sarfion's desk holds a vast collection of magical scrolls. The scrolls are all inscribed with spells of 1st–5th level; the DM should determine the exact number of scrolls and use Table 90: Scrolls in the *DMG* to determine the nature of each one. Note that the drawers of the desk are rigged with *fire traps* and similar spells to discourage looters.

6. Sarfion's Quarters. Sarfion's bedroom is a simple affair, containing a comfortable bed, a tall wardrobe, and a small bookshelf. The books on the shelf are fictional tales that Sarfion reads for amusement only. They are not particularly valuable.

The bottom of the bookshelf has a secret compartment that thieves can detect with a successful Find Traps roll. The compartment contains membership fees paid by a number of local and visiting wizards—2,000 gp total. The coins are contained in a bone-inlaid, ebony flatbox protected by an *avoidance* spell. The box is locked, and Sarfion carries the only key.

Magically bound to the ebony box are three invisible stalkers. The stalkers manifest whenever the box is removed from the Academy. Once the thief is slain and the box is safely returned to the Academy, the invisible stalkers return to the Elemental Plane of Air. (The letter of the agreement states that only the box must be returned; the invisible stalkers, therefore, don't care whether the box is full or empty.)

Invisible stalkers (3): AC 3; MV 12, fly 12 (A); HD 8; hp 50, 48, 39; THAC0 13; #AT 1; Dmg 4–16; SA surprise; SD invisibility; MR 30%; SZ L (8' tall); ML 14; Int high (13); AL N; XP 3,000; *MM*/208.

7. Private Workroom. A part-time alchemist, Sarfion has created several potions and stores them on the south table. The DM should determine the exact number of potions and use Table 89: Potions and Oils in the *DMG* to determine the nature of each one. The table against the north wall is cluttered with delicate alchemical equipment that is worth 4,500 gp intact.

Hiding in an *invisible* crate under the north table is Sarfion's maggot golem. The golem hides inside the crate until called out by Sarfion or until someone other than Sarfion meddles with the contents of this chamber. It obeys only Sarfion's commands.

Maggot golem: AC 8; MV 9; HD 8; hp 45; THAC0 13; #AT 1; Dmg special; SA smothering (after it successfully strikes a target, the golem automatically smothers its prey for 2d6 points of damage each round thereafter); SD immune to edged weapons, half damage from blunt weapons, spell immunity, regenerates 2 hp/round; SZ M (4' tall); ML 20; Int semi (2); AL N; XP 5,000; *MCA4*/46.

8. Classroom. This chamber is where Sarfion trains novitiates in the "art" of spellcasting. The room is largely empty, giving Sarfion plenty of room to work his craft.

Painted on the floor is a magic circle used for summoning and binding outer planar creatures. Sarfion used it to help open a *gate* to the Far Realm. The gate is sustained by some unknown force based in the Far Realm; Although he has the power to collapse it, he has absolutely no intention of doing so.

A *detect magic* spell cast in the vicinity of the magic circle reveals the presence of Conjuration/Summoning magic. Any living creature that stands on the circle has a base 10% chance of being drawn into the Far Realm (and lost forever, unless the PC has some means of returning to the Prime Material plane or the DM wants to run an adventure in the Far Realm). Creatures native to the Far Realm (such as the neh-thalggu) trigger the *gate* automatically. Sarfion, who has ventured into the Far Realm on several occasions and made it back alive, has a 50% chance of opening the *gate* when standing in the circle.

The *gate* can be destroyed in one of many ways. Destroying the magic circle causes the *gate* to collapse forever, as does a successful *dispel magic* cast against 16th-level magic or an *anti-magic shell* positioned such that it crosses the circle. One charge from a *wand of negation* directed at the magic circle causes the *gate* to vanish.

If it's near death, the neh-thalggu (see area 9) attempts to flee through the *gate*. Once it enters the Far Realm, it collapses the *gate* so that it cannot be pursued.

If Sarfion is attacked elsewhere in the Academy, he retreats to this chamber to make a final stand. Driven mad by his previous excursions into the Far Realm, Sarfion is more likely to flee through the *gate* than simply *teleport* away. He wants to explore the Far Realm further and doesn't want to risk being

trapped on the Prime. If the *gate* collapses before he can step through, he screams in frustration, casts his *delayed blast fireball* spell in the room, and *teleports* away. The *fireball* not only destroys the chamber but also sets fire to the Academy, burning it to the ground in 1d4+4 rounds.

In the southwest corner of the room is an archway hidden by an *illusionary wall*. (See the spell description in the *PH*.) Beyond the *illusionary wall* is the neh-thalggu's lair. If it senses intruders in this room, it emerges from its hidden enclave and attacks.

9. Hidden Chamber. This featureless room is hidden behind Sarfion's *illusionary wall* and contains the dread brain collector. The neh-thalggu attacks until reduced to fewer than 20 hit points, at which point it tries to flee through the *gate* in area **8**, returning to its home plane.

Neh-thalggu (brain collector): AC 2; MV 18; HD 10; hp 53; THAC0 11; #AT 1; Dmg 1–10; SA/SD spells; SZ L (10' long); ML 14; Int very (11); AL CN; XP 2,000; *MCA4*/58.

To determine the number of brains the neh-thalggu has collected so far, roll 1d12. Each transplanted brain can hold a single wizard spell no higher than 3rd level, chosen by the DM or randomly rolled below:

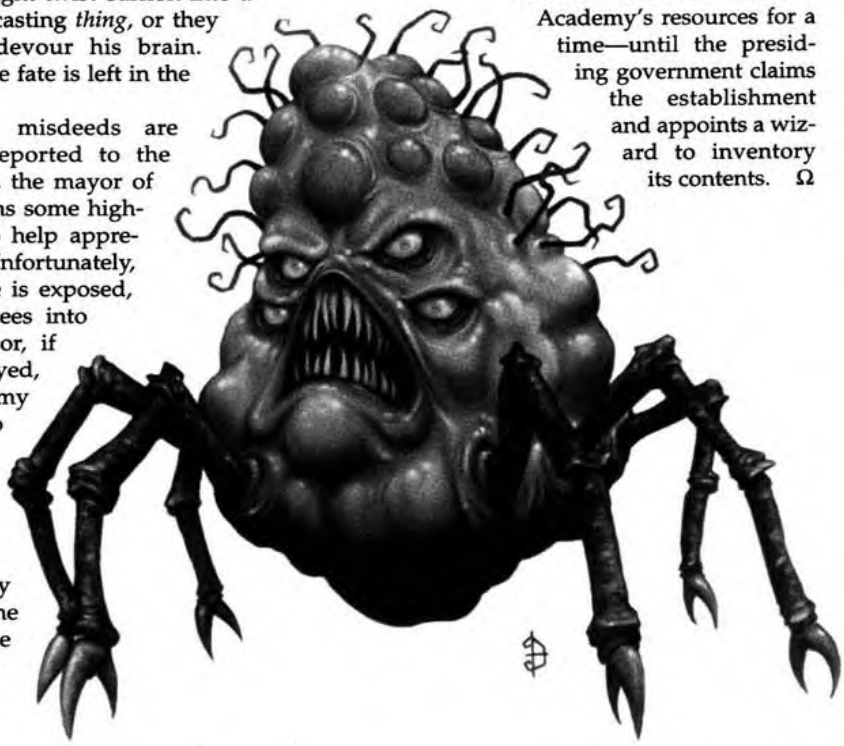
Roll	Spell
1	*color spray*
2	*dancing lights*
3	*magic missile*
4	*shocking grasp*
5	*spider climb*
6	*blindness*
7	*darkness 15' radius*
8	*ESP*
9	*invisibility*
10	*ray of enfeeblement*
11	*stinking cloud*
12	*web*
13	*clairvoyance*
14	*dispel magic*
15	*fireball*
16	*hold person*
17	*nondetection*
18	*protection from normal missiles*
19	*slow*
20	*tongues*

Concluding the Adventure

The neh-thalggu considers Sarfion a tool for the expedient acquisition of human and demihuman brains. If Sarfion's "operation" is exposed and thwarted, the neh-thalggu has no further use for the wizard and abandons him. If Sarfion is able to flee through the *gate* and enter the Far Realm, there's no telling what the neh-thalggu or the Far Realm's other denizens might do to the poor wizard. They might twist Sarfion into a demented, spellcasting *thing*, or they might simply devour his brain. Sarfion's ultimate fate is left in the DM's hands.

If Sarfion's misdeeds are revealed and reported to the local authorities, the mayor of Hardby summons some high-level wizards to help apprehend Sarfion. Unfortunately, once his scheme is exposed, Sarfion either flees into the Far Realm or, if the *gate* is destroyed, razes the Academy and *teleports* to another refuge where he can continue his "research" into the Far Realm.

If the PCs slay or apprehend the wizard before he can destroy the Academy, they can avail themselves of the Academy's resources for a time—until the presiding government claims the establishment and appoints a wizard to inventory its contents. Ω



Kren Sarfion

Kren Sarfion, human male W16: AC 2 (*robe of the archmagi, circlet of protection* +3); MV 12; hp 42; THAC0 15; #AT 1; Dmg by spell or weapon type; Str 9, Dex 10, Con 11, Int 18, Wis 13, Cha 15; SD magical items (see below); MR 5% (granted by *robe*); SZ M (5'7"); ML 14; AL CN; XP 12,000; *robe of the archmagi* (gray), *circlet of protection* +3 (bonus applies to AC and saving throws), *ring of mind shielding, ring of regeneration, wand of negation* (14 charges), *wand of paralyzation* (49 charges), *Boccob's blessed book* (contains all of Sarfion's memorized spells plus others determined by the DM), *rod of smiting*, key to ebony flatbox in area **6**.

Spells (5/5/5/5/5/3/2/1): 1st—*cantrip, detect magic, identify* (×3), *read magic*; 2nd—*detect invisibility, ESP* (×2), *invisibility, wizard lock*; 3rd—*clairaudience, clairvoyance, dispel magic, nondetection, suggestion*; 4th—*detect scrying, minor globe of invulnerability, phantasmal killer, stoneskin, wizard eye*; 5th—*avoidance, contact other plane, domination, feeblemind, teleport*; 6th—*disintegrate, eyebite, legend lore*; 7th—*banishment, delayed blast fireball*; 8th—*Bigby's clenched fist*.

Kren is 74 years old, but thanks to some potions of *longevity* he appears to be in his mid-forties. His short-cropped, brown hair is thinning on top, and his eyes are dark and penetrating. Slightly overweight, Kren prefers his drab, loose-fitting gray *robe of the archmagi* to more stylish apparel. He has a pale complexion and rarely ventures outside. He uses *cantrips* to keep himself tidy and prefers to eat at nearby establishments.

Sarfion's Spell Selection

When providing assistance to members of the Academy, Kren makes good use of his *detect magic, identify, read magic, dispel magic, contact other plane*, and *legend lore* spells.

If he needs to spy on someone, Kren uses his *ESP, invisibility, clairvoyance, clairaudience*, and *wizard eye* spells.

For defense, Kren relies on his *detect invisibility, nondetection, suggestion, minor globe of invulnerability, stoneskin*, and *teleport* spells.

If he needs to drive away unwanted visitors, Kren prefers to use nonlethal spells such as *suggestion, avoidance, domination, eyebite* (charm), and *banishment*.

When Kren means to destroy an enemy, he prefers to cast either *phantasmal killer* or *disintegrate*, as neither leaves behind evidence of harmful spellcasting.

When luring prey to the neh-thalggu, Kren employs his *suggestion, domination*, or *feeblemind* spell.

If his collaboration with the neh-thalggu is revealed to the local authorities, Kren casts a *delayed blast fireball* in his upstairs private library before *teleporting* to safety. The *fireball* not only burns the Academy to the ground but also destroys all evidence of the wizard's wrongdoing.

Would you let these strangers into your *house?*

A HEAD FOR BUSINESS

BY JD WIKER

The sandmen cometh

Artwork by Jon Foster
Cartography by Diesel

Before moving into the RPG industry, JD spent several years at St. Sylvester's Church, where he worked as a consultant.

"A Head for Business" is an ALTERNITY® adventure for the DARK•MATTER® Campaign Setting. It is designed for six 3rd-level Hoffmann Institute agents, and the group should include at least one Tech Op and one Diplomat hero.

Background

Amid all the plots and conspiracies and paranormal goings-on, work goes on for the ordinary people—the ones who never suspect just how close to annihilation or enslavement the human race is. When one of these people stumbles into the web of secrets surrounding the multitude of international (and interstellar) conspiracies, they can wreak untold havoc with their fear, anger, and greed.

Eighteen months ago, a small-time hustler named Kaoru Ogura secretly witnessed a battle between Hoffmann Institute agents and the mysterious alien-controlled sandmen. After the Hoffmann agents departed, Ogura scurried out of his hiding place to grab a couple of the sandmen's intriguing "dart pistols," hoping to turn a quick buck. To his disappointment, the weapons crumbled in his hands—disassembled at a molecular level by the same nanites that were at that moment disintegrating the dead sandmen.

Not to be denied, Ogura turned his attention to the dissolving sandmen. He tried to stop the dissolution process, losing body after body to the implacable nanites. Finally, he got lucky with some chemicals and refrigeration, and he managed to save one part of the last sandman: its head.

Hurrying home with his prize tucked in a cooler, Ogura labored to find a way to communicate with the head without it dissolving further. After a couple false starts, he rigged a synthesizer to translate impulses from the head into speech. He explained to the head who he was and what he had done. It asked him why. Ogura showed it a drawing of the "dart pistol" that had dissolved.

"Tell me how to make these."

Adventure Summary

After sandmen board a commercial airliner and kill several people while looking for Kaoru Ogura, the Hoffmann Institute assigns the heroes to find out why. They journey to his warehouse in Portland, Oregon, where—after

satisfying himself that the heroes are not sandmen—Ogura negotiates with them for protection. The negotiations are cut short when sandmen arrive to kill him.

Ogura agrees to accompany the heroes to a Hoffmann Institute safehouse and insists on traveling by train. As the train is leaving the station, though, several sandmen arrive on the boarding platform and give chase. On their way to a Hoffmann Institute safehouse, the heroes discover that Ogura has been making money by selling copies of sandmen needler pistols—from a design supplied to him by a preserved sandman head.

Then, in a tunnel in the Rocky Mountains, the train comes to a sudden stop. Sandmen trigger an avalanche in front of the train and use the resulting confusion to make one last grasp for their quarry.

The Head

The sandman head Ogura has preserved is a badly decomposed head and nothing more. The head shows signs of the chemical bath that Ogura gave it to prevent its destruction by the nanites. The features are indistinct, but glossy, as though someone had shellacked it.

That the head belongs to a sandman is easily determined by anyone who knows what a sandman is, although the Gamemaster might require that the heroes make a successful Awareness–*perception* check to recognize it in its current state. The obvious signs are a set of small, thin wires coming out of the head's neck, one of which has a connector for a computer cable. (The cable is in the bottom of the cooler.) Slightly less apparent are the narrow, silvery lines running through the flesh, like arteries filled with mercury.

The head is cool to the touch. Ogura, knowing nothing of sandmen, never considered that it might be a bad idea to handle the head and does so on a regular basis.

The head is always conscious but cannot speak unless it is connected to Ogura's computer. It can hear quite plainly, despite Ogura's belief that his computer is the only means of communicating with it. Its eyes function normally, and it can smell and taste after a fashion. Obviously, though, it cannot move of its own accord.

Scene 1: Investigating Flight 315

Yesterday afternoon, everyone in the heroes' city watched in dread as police SWAT teams responded to a terrorist threat at the airport. According to the police, two of the passengers waited until everyone was aboard Pan Am Flight 315, then produced handguns and began executing passengers. They never issued any demands and ignored attempts at contact.

For three long hours, every local television was tuned to the crisis, and then it was suddenly over, with SWAT teams hauling the dead terrorists and their victims out onto the runway. The surviving passengers were herded out the other side of the aircraft by FBI agents, hustled onto buses, and taken to safety. Some of the passengers appeared on television later that night to talk about their harrowing experience and tearfully hug their families for the cameras. By the next morning, the airport had resumed its normal schedules, as though nothing had ever happened.

The Briefing

Like nearly everyone else in the city, the heroes know only about the events at the airport from the news coverage. But early the next morning, they receive a call from their superior, Field Director Jim Doyle, to gather for a briefing.

Doyle begins by showing the heroes a clip taken from the evening news—an interview with a man who had been aboard the plane when the terrorists began shooting hostages. "They seemed just like anybody else until they stood up and started shooting," says the man on the screen, identified as Mark Gaines, an electronics salesman. "I was sure I was going to die." The report goes on to indicate that seven people died in the incident: five passengers and two terrorists. The names of the passengers haven't been released yet; the FBI is waiting until they inform the families.

Once the heroes have reviewed the newscast, read or paraphrase the following:

> Doyle pauses the tape and shakes his head. "We found out this morning that this man, Gaines, is actually an FBI agent—and he was never aboard Flight 315. In fact, if our information is correct, he arrived by helicopter just after the SWAT teams went in. Now what does this all tell us?"

Doyle pauses again, giving the heroes a chance to put it all together.

> "It tells us that whatever happened aboard that jet yesterday, the FBI doesn't want anybody to know. Otherwise they would have let a real passenger talk to the press. They've released only about half of the passengers; the other half are still being detained at the airport in this storage hangar."

Doyle shows the heroes an aerial photograph of the airport and points to a building circled in red. Show the players Handout #1, then read or paraphrase the following:

> "Vehicles have been moving in and out since yesterday, and the official story is that the passengers are being released in small groups. But they're not showing up at home, or anywhere else, which means they're probably still here."
>
> After a moment, Doyle continues. "The Hoffmann Institute wants to know a couple of things, and since this is our city, we've been assigned to find the answers.
>
> "First: What really happened aboard Flight 315?
>
> "Second: Why were some passengers released and some detained?
>
> "Third: Seven bodies were taken off the plane. Who were they?
>
> "Fourth, and last: What's going on inside this hangar? Why is the FBI still there?"
>
> Doyle places a large box full of files, printouts, and videotape on the conference table. "This is everything we have on Flight 315, the news coverage, the FBI operation, and so on. Let's order some take-out and see if we can't find all the answers in here."

Research

Field Director Doyle suggests a few different courses of research:

- Reviewing the news footage of the terrorist attack;
- Examining the airline records for information on the passengers;
- Interviewing the passengers who have already been released;
- Looking for connections with known conspiracy figures, paranormal events, and Stranger activities.

The heroes can split up these tasks however they like, but Doyle points out that time is of the essence: "We don't know how long the FBI is going to stay in that hangar, so we can't afford to put all of our efforts into investigating any one lead."

Each of these four tasks is considered a complex skill check, as detailed below. Skill checks can be attempted once each hour. If any given task accumulates 3 or more failures, that avenue of investigation becomes closed—

Supporting Cast

Kaoru Ogura, Arms Dealer
Level 6 Diplomat (Tech Op)

STR	6	[–1]	Int	14	[+2]
DEX	9	[0]	WIL	11	[+1]
CON	8		PER	12	

Durability: 8/8/4/4
Action Check: 13+/12/6/3
Move: sprint 14, run 10, walk 4
#Actions: 2
Reaction Score: Ordinary/2
Last Resorts: 2
Perks: Good Luck, High Tech
Flaws: Criminal Record, Obsessed, Rampant Paranoia

Attacks

Unarmed	3/1/0*	d4–1s/d4s/d4+1s	LI/O
9mm pistol	10/5/2**	d4+1w/d4+2w/d4m	HI/O
Needler pistol	10/5/2**	special	special

* +d4 base die
** –1 step bonus (sights with laser aiming dots)

Defenses
Armor: none

Skills
Stamina [8]; Modern [9]—*pistol [10]*; Stealth [9]—*hide [10]*; Vehicle Operation [9]—*land [10]*; Business [14]—*illicit [16]*; Knowledge [14]—*computer operation [15], deduce [15], language (Japanese) [16]*; System Operation [14]—*communications [16], sensors [16]*; Technical Science [14]—*jury-rig [17], repair [16], knowledge [16]*; Awareness [11]—*perception [12]*; Investigate [11]—*search [12]*; Street Smart [11]—*criminal elements [13]*; Deception [12]—*bluff [14]*; Interaction [12]—*bargain [14]*.

Kaoru Ogura is a man with a tiger by the tail. Although he has captured a sandman head and is using it to make more money than he has ever seen, just possessing it makes him a major target for competitors, police, the loan sharks who gave him his start—and, of course, the sandmen. He's convinced that everyone wants to take it from him, and he guards it with a fanaticism bordering on madness.

Ogura began his career in Japan as a small time street hustler repairing and modifying firearms for youth gangs, all the while seeking ways to turn his small talents into big money. He borrowed money from the Yakuza, at first to finance ambitious schemes, then to buy food. When Ogura finally got lucky enough to make money on one of his weapon modifications, the Yakuza took his money and his design and put him on a freighter to America, where he wouldn't be tempted to ask them for another loan (and they wouldn't be tempted to kill him).

Once Ogura picked up the language, the United States was really no different than Japan. He met people who needed weapons, and they paid him to get them. He made enough to afford a place no one else wanted and modified it to fit his needs. Of course, it looks like a junk collection, but Ogura didn't get it to impress the ladies. He lives and works there every day, and now that he has the sandman head, it has become his personal fortress against an attack by the sandman's associates.

the FBI takes notice, witnesses refuse to speak, evidence becomes damaged, and so on.

The News Coverage

Examining the videotapes of news coverage requires the Awareness–*perception* skill. Supporting skills include Creativity–*film* and Knowledge–*computer operation*.

1 success: An hour before the SWAT teams went into the aircraft, the news crews were herded out of the airport so as not to allow the terrorists to see what was going on outside.

2 successes: In one of the frequent zoom-in shots of the aircraft, movement in the windows can be clearly seen. Details are impossible to make out, however.

3 successes: Capturing images from the videotape and enhancing them turns up one shot in which some sort of small projectile bounces off the inside of one of the jet's windows. Nothing clearer can be obtained.

4 successes: In the shots of the aftermath of the SWAT assault, the police pull the bodies out of the airplane, already wrapped in plastic body bags. In the background, a large white panel truck heading toward the line of hostages escaping out the other side of the plane suddenly changes course and heads toward the body bags instead. Though there is some sort of writing on the side of the vehicle—a short word or acronym—the angle of the camera and the extreme distance make it impossible to read, even with video captures and enhanced zooms.

Airline Records

Examining the stack of airline records requires the Investigate–*research* skill; Investigate–*track* and Computer Science–*hacking* can both act as supporting skills.

1 success: Pan Am Flight 315 was bound for Tokyo—a direct flight with no stops.

2 successes: The heroes have a complete list of all the passengers, when their tickets were purchased, and by whom. Several were from out of state, and a few were from out of the country. Many were purchased in Japan, and at least three-quarters of the passengers had Japanese names.

3 successes: The flight was full, with four different people waiting on stand-by for a seat to open up. Only one person on stand-by got on the flight.

4 successes: The one person who didn't show up to claim his seat on the plane was Hiro Ngai (pronounced "Hero Y"). Ngai's ticket was purchased online by Kaoru Ogura, from an address in Tokyo. Also, several hours after the police and FBI had finished examining the jet, it was flown away by Pan Am personnel for cosmetic repairs to the cabin. Airport personnel who saw the interior of the jet said, "It was riddled with bullets. All of the windows had to be replaced before it was flight-worthy again."

Interviewing Passengers

Interviewing the passengers who have already been released requires the skill Interaction–*interview*, with Deception–*bribe* and Knowledge–*language (Japanese)* as supporting skills.

PLAYER HANDOUT #1: Aerial photograph of the airport and storage hangar (circled, top left).

1 success: The passengers already released all had seats in the back of the plane. Most of the action—the terrorists, then the SWAT teams—took place in the first-class section of the jet. The terrorists only occasionally poked their heads into the economy-class cabin. "We had no idea anything was wrong until we heard the screams from the first-class cabin."

2 successes: The terrorists appeared to be very nervous; they were sweating profusely. They were looking for someone whose description they didn't have. They kept calling out a name—too far away to be heard clearly—and shooting someone when they didn't get the answer they wanted. "They kept calling out the same name, and then there would be a low noise, like a gun with a silencer, followed by more screaming."

3 successes: When the SWAT team boarded the plane, they came in from under the floor, through the luggage compartment. Then the rear emergency exit opened, and SWAT troops began dragging people off the plane, onto an air cushion, and into the storage hangar. "They made us all kneel on the floor with our hands on our heads until they had verified who we were. A man wearing an FBI badge seemed to be coordinating this part of the operation."

4 successes: The FBI were primarily interested in two types of information: what the passengers saw before the SWAT team, and what they saw after the SWAT team. "All we could really say was that we had gotten a glimpse of the terrorists before the shooting started. After that, we were all just too concerned with getting off the airplane. They seemed satisfied with that."

5 successes: There were officials present at the debriefing who weren't FBI or police. They seemed more like medical personnel, but they were primarily interested in examining the dead passengers and the terrorists. "They didn't start examining the injured until well after they had packed up the dead in these strange glass coffins they removed from inside a large white truck. The letters on the side of the truck read CDC."

6 successes: "I don't think they noticed me, but I heard them very clearly. The CDC man said that the bodies showed no signs of infection, and the FBI man seemed relieved. He said, 'If we are very lucky, we won't have to sterilize everyone.' He said it as if it were a bad thing, to make certain we were not infected."

Connections

If the heroes wish to draw connections between the research they have already done and information the Hoffmann Institute has about other cases, the appropriate skill is Investigate–*research*, with Investigate–*track* and Knowledge–*deduce* as supporting skills.

They can accumulate no more successes with this complex skill check than the highest number of successes in any of the other three complex skill checks they have performed. This number is not based on cumulative successes between two or more complex skill checks—just a single task.

2 successes: FBI agents were already at the airport, although apparently not for any sort

DOSSIER

Ogura, Kaoru

The Hoffmann Institute

New York • Chicago • Flagstaff • Washington D.C. • Barcelona • Cairo • Edo • Jakarta

Ogura, Kaoru

Age: 27
Born Chiba City, Japan
Naturalized US citizen: 1999
Languages: Japanese, English
Skills: weapon repair/modification, vehicle repair/modification, engineering
Raised in orphanage: 1974–1990

Aliases: None known

Series of minor arrests for possession of stolen property, vandalism, failure to produce identification, 1989–94;
sentenced to a total of 18 months in correctional facilities;
Possible Yakuza involvement, 1993–1998;
Suspected firearms trafficking, 1992–present;
Suspected exotic weaponry trafficking, 1999–present.

Current Status

Currently under surveillance by Portland office of Hoffmann Institute pending further evidence in black market needler pistol trafficking (Agent in Charge: Samuel Takimashi).

File #421-685-948-004T

PLAYER HANDOUT #2: Institute brief on Kaoru Ogura

of anti-terrorist mission. They were in place as part of a surveillance operation.

4 successes: The name "Kaoru Ogura" shows up in Hoffmann Institute records as an arms dealer suspected of trafficking in black-market alien-technology weapons, including items reputedly stolen from the Agency for Foreign Technology. He is currently under surveillance by the Hoffmann Institute at his warehouse/office in Portland, Oregon.

5 successes: Imitations of sandman needler pistols, modified to carry lethal toxins instead of sandman morpheotoxin, have been trickling into the black market for the last year. Ogura is one of several people suspected of dealing in them.

Conclusions

From the information they have gathered, the heroes can ascertain that two sandmen boarded Pan Am Flight 315, waited until the plane had pulled away from the terminal, and began looking for someone. Then SWAT teams arrived and killed the sandmen, bagged the bodies of the dead passengers, and passed two of the bagged bodies off as the dead terrorists. Passengers in first class, where the sandmen were, would have most likely seen the sandmen's bodies dissolving after death, which would explain why the FBI wanted to cover up the real story. Apparently the Center for Disease Control is also involved, and they tested the dead passengers for signs of sandman nanite infection. They are probably still testing the survivors, which would explain why they have not yet released any of the passengers.

The Airport

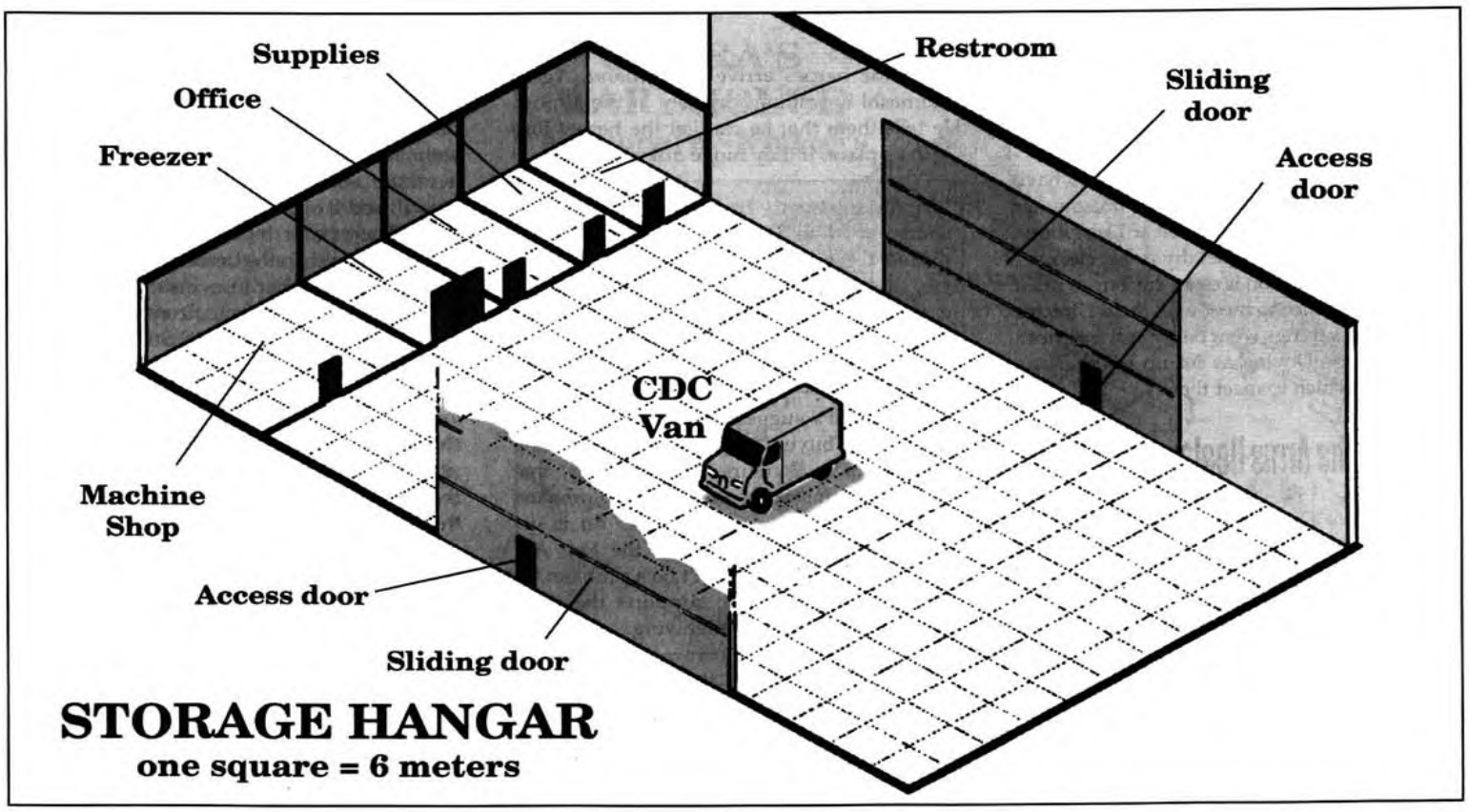
While their research answers most of the questions, the heroes still do not know for certain what is happening inside the airport storage hangar. If the heroes wish to investigate the storage hangar at the airport, Field Director Doyle suggests going between the hours of 1 A.M. and 4 A.M., when the airport is less busy. Doyle advises the heroes to get in and get out as quickly as possible, and to avoid confrontations—a firefight will only make their job more difficult.

Doyle also cautions them to have a good cover story ready in case they are caught; the Hoffmann Institute will back them up with whatever they arrange. If none of the heroes has an appropriate background (say, as an FBI agent), then posing as FAA inspectors, insurance adjusters, or even just airport maintenance personnel would all be viable options.

Getting into the airport will be much easier than it was the day of the terrorist attack. There is still a considerable law enforcement presence at the airport, and everyone is alert. Consequently, carrying weapons into the airport or poking around in restricted areas will be much more difficult than normal. The thorough searches of the police (they are scanning everyone who passes through the X-ray machines) gain a –1 step bonus to find concealed weapons. Similarly, uses of Personality skills to gain the trust of airport personnel suffer a +1 step penalty.

Going into the airport during daylight hours makes things even trickier, adding an additional +/–1 step to the activities described above.

Unless the heroes have a cover story that is so good they can simply drive up to the storage hangar (Gamemaster's discretion, though heroes can bounce ideas off Doyle first), they will probably have to enter through the terminal, the access gate, or over the security fence. The first requires a Manipulation–*lockpick* skill check; the second requires Deception–*bluff*; and the last requires Athletics–*climb*, followed by a Stealth–*sneak* check.



A hero who fails one of these finds him or herself surrounded by d4+2 police officers in d6+1 rounds. If the hero is caught with a weapon or rolls a Critical Failure on a Personality-based skill check with the airport personnel, the officers will be supported by d4 FBI agents. (For the police, use the Ordinary Law Enforcer template in Chapter 6: Supporting Cast, in the *Gamemaster Guide*. For FBI, use the Good Law Enforcer template.)

The Storage Hangar

The storage hangar is located just off the runway, about half a kilometer away from the main terminal. At this hour there aren't many flights, but there are still plenty of planes moving from hangar to hangar, maintenance vehicles driving around, and so forth. Awareness checks based on hearing suffer a +1 step penalty which, in the heroes' favor, applies to the opposition as well.

By the time the heroes arrive at the storage hangar, the remaining passengers have been debriefed and sent on their way. (Some who got a good look at the terrorists aboard the airplane—and specifically, what happened to their bodies after they were shot—have been more thoroughly debriefed than the others and now are extremely unclear on what they really saw.) The FBI agents who were on the scene have almost completely cleared out, and the CDC operatives are just finishing loading the corpses of the dead passengers aboard their panel van.

The CDC panel van, parked inside the hangar, is the real point of interest here. At present, only a single CDC agent is in the van, sitting behind the wheel while he waits for the last corpse to be loaded. (Treat the agent as a Good Law Enforcer.) The heroes have 3 minutes before three more CDC agents arrive with the last biological containment capsule. During that time, the heroes must either distract or dispose of the driver, open the rear door of the van, get a good look around, and depart.

The rear of the van is refrigerated and contains four biological containment capsules (2-meter-long containers that look like Plexiglas coffins) with room for two more. Each capsule contains the nude, frozen corpse of an oriental man in his mid-20s (but of otherwise wildly varying appearances), each of whom has a bullet wound in the forehead (as ordered by the CDC, to ensure that none of them underwent nanite transformation). The only identification on the men or the capsules are barcodes on the outside of each capsule.

Each man also has a smaller, pinprick wound, slightly discolored, where he was originally wounded by the needler pistols of the sandman "terrorists." Noticing the second wound requires an Awareness–*perception* check with a +2 step penalty, +1 if the heroes open the capsule first (which requires a Security–*devices* skill check at a +1 step penalty). Assuming the heroes take a corpse out of a capsule, a successful Medical Science–*forensics* skill check reveals that the gunshot was the fatal wound; the victims were probably unconscious when they were killed. (Remember to apply the Medical Science situational modifiers from the *Player's Handbook*, Chapter 4: Skills, to this check, especially if the heroes try to perform a quick autopsy before the CDC agents return.)

After 3 minutes, the CDC agents return with the final capsule. Unless the heroes try to stop them, the CDC loads and secures the last capsule, locks the van, and drives away. However, being a little twitchy due to the nature of this situation, if they discover anyone inside the van, they open fire and ask questions later. Hopefully, the heroes are long gone before that happens. But if a fight does

develop, d4+1 FBI agents arrive within d4+1 rounds from the hangar beside this one (where they are dismantling their debriefing operation).

If the heroes are careful and don't attract attention, they can leave pretty much however they like. If the airport authorities have been alerted to trouble, the heroes must either barrel past security or pull off a Deception–*bluff* check at a +2 step penalty to get clear.

Once their mission is over, the heroes must return to the office to meet with Field Director Doyle, unless things went badly at the airport, in which case Doyle has set up an alternate location at which to meet them.

Scene 2: The Arms Dealer

Field Director Doyle tells the heroes that the next step in the investigation is to check out the arms dealer, Kaoru Ogura. He arranges for a flight to Portland (from a different airport), and briefs the heroes on the way. Either show the following to the players, or read it to them as Doyle:

> Doyle tells you that he's been in contact with Agent Takimashi, and that the surveillance team reports that Ogura is still in Portland, in his warehouse home.
>
> "Takimashi's people can place Ogura at his warehouse residence all day yesterday and today. They say that right after the terrorist incident hit the national news, Ogura ran home and locked the doors and hasn't come out since. Even money says he thinks they're after him, whether they are or not."
>
> According to Takimashi, surveillance on Ogura isn't turning up anything conclusive. Twice over the past 3 months, Ogura has sold imitation needler pistols to clients, one of whom turned over his high-tech weapon to Takimashi's people after some earnest "persuading." Although Ogura certainly possesses the skills to construct needler pistols himself, it's far more likely that he is simply selling them for someone else.
>
> "Everything in Ogura's file says 'small-time loser.' He doesn't have the connections to buy the schematics from someone else, and there's no way he could've analyzed a real one and reproduced it—it dissolves when the sandman does. At best, he could've found someone else's copy and is copying that. But that still leaves us with someone else out there who knows how to build sandman needler pistols—and that's whom the Hoffmann Institute wants."

Meeting Ogura

When the heroes arrive in Portland, Agent Takimashi is waiting for them at the airport. He tells them that he can get the heroes into Ogura's place, if they move quickly.

> "Ogura apparently had set up a buy with some would-be bank robbers. Portland PD picked them up yesterday for a different job, and they tried to offer up Ogura in exchange for their freedom. Our man on the inside alerted us, but Ogura doesn't know they won't be keeping their appointment."

Takimashi's suggestion is that the heroes pose as the buyers and keep their meeting with Ogura in 2 hours. Unfortunately, that doesn't give the heroes much time to prepare. "But since all you really need to do is get inside and talk to him about the Pan Am thing," he says, "it shouldn't be a problem."

Field Director Doyle supports the plan. Read or paraphrase the following:

> "Even if it turns out this guy's not the needler connection, if the sandmen are after him, he might know something about them. If we don't take this opportunity, we'll have a tougher situation on our hands: breaking into a paranoid arms dealer's warehouse while sandmen are after him and getting his cooperation before the sandmen figure out where he is."

If the heroes follow this plan, Takimashi can provide them with enough details about Ogura's would-be customers—names, history with Ogura, details of the deal, and so on—that they should be able to get inside. Doyle provides a briefcase full of flash money ($10,000, enough for four imitation needler pistols) and provides directions to the neighborhood where Ogura's warehouse is located.

If any of the heroes choose not to go to the meeting, they can join Doyle in the surveillance center Takimashi has set up in an old office building nearby. Another Hoffmann agent there, Rick Verner, is watching the outside of Ogura's building on a bank of video monitors, but as Takimashi explains, he's never been able to install any cameras inside; Ogura's too paranoid.

Ogura's Warehouse

Ogura's home is an old brick factory with boarded-up windows and a rusted fire escape that's no longer completely connected to the building. (It sways when anyone puts weight on it. Ogura doesn't mind because he figures if there is a fire, all the ammunition in the building will blow long before he can reach safety.)

The only visible entrance that isn't bricked or boarded over is an old appliance repair shop, with a steel cage over the front window, a reinforced door (Durability 6, Toughness Good), and a big "CLOSED" sign in the window. There is a button next to the door, though, and when the heroes press it, they can hear a distant buzzer from inside the building.

A moment later, a voice from the other side of the door says, "Who is it? Stand in front of the peephole where I can see you!" The voice has a Japanese accent.

The heroes can talk to Ogura all they want through the door, but he won't let them in unless he can see them and they claim to be the buyers he's expecting. If the heroes use this ruse, they can attempt a Deception–*bluff* check with a –1 step bonus. Any other pretense, and the heroes must attempt an Interaction or Deception skill with a +2 step penalty. Only one hero should make this check. If the attempt succeeds, Ogura buzzes them in. If the attempt fails, the hero must either spend a Last Resort point to convert the failure to an Ordinary success or break through the door, which won't incline Ogura to trust them.

Ogura's Tests

Once the heroes get inside, the heroes find themselves in an entryway leading to a dark green curtain. They also see that they haven't been talking with Ogura directly but to an intercom attached to the door—along with a video camera. His voice comes over the speaker again as they enter: "Close the door. Then put all of your weapons, cellphones, and electronic equipment on the floor."

Ogura has a few defenses to protect himself from hostile visitors—and to determine if his guests are "inorganics." The first is an airport metal detector, located just a few meters inside the door. Beyond it is a curtain that obscures the rest of the hallway. Assuming they disarm themselves, Ogura tells them: "Now, one at a time, go through the curtain. No tricks! I'm watching you!"

If the heroes attempt to carry any metal objects through the detector, there is a loud beeping noise, and Ogura's angry voice comes over the speaker again: "You don't need guns here! You want guns! I got lots of guns! You keep playing around, I'll show you how they work!" Ogura doesn't let them go any farther until he's satisfied they aren't bringing weapons inside.

On the other side of the curtain is a staircase leading up, and at the top, the heroes can see another intercom. Ogura's voice urges them up. "And you better be who you say you are—cause if not, this'll fry you inside!" Ogura is referring to his microwave emitter, which he's set up to zap sandmen trying to get inside. What he doesn't admit is that it doesn't work; he hasn't had time to wire it properly. It does emit an ominously loud click and buzz whenever someone gets halfway up the steps. Once past that, the heroes can see another door beside the intercom; it buzzes as the heroes approach.

Past the door at the top of the stairs is Ogura's workshop: a dusty hodgepodge of electronic parts, tools, and assorted junk. From somewhere comes the sound of a steady electronic whine and persistent pinging, almost drowned out by country and western music. After a moment the sounds get louder, as though a door had opened, and a diminutive man peeks nervously at the heroes from behind a table covered with car batteries.

"You're here to buy? You're not the police? Not associated with the police?"

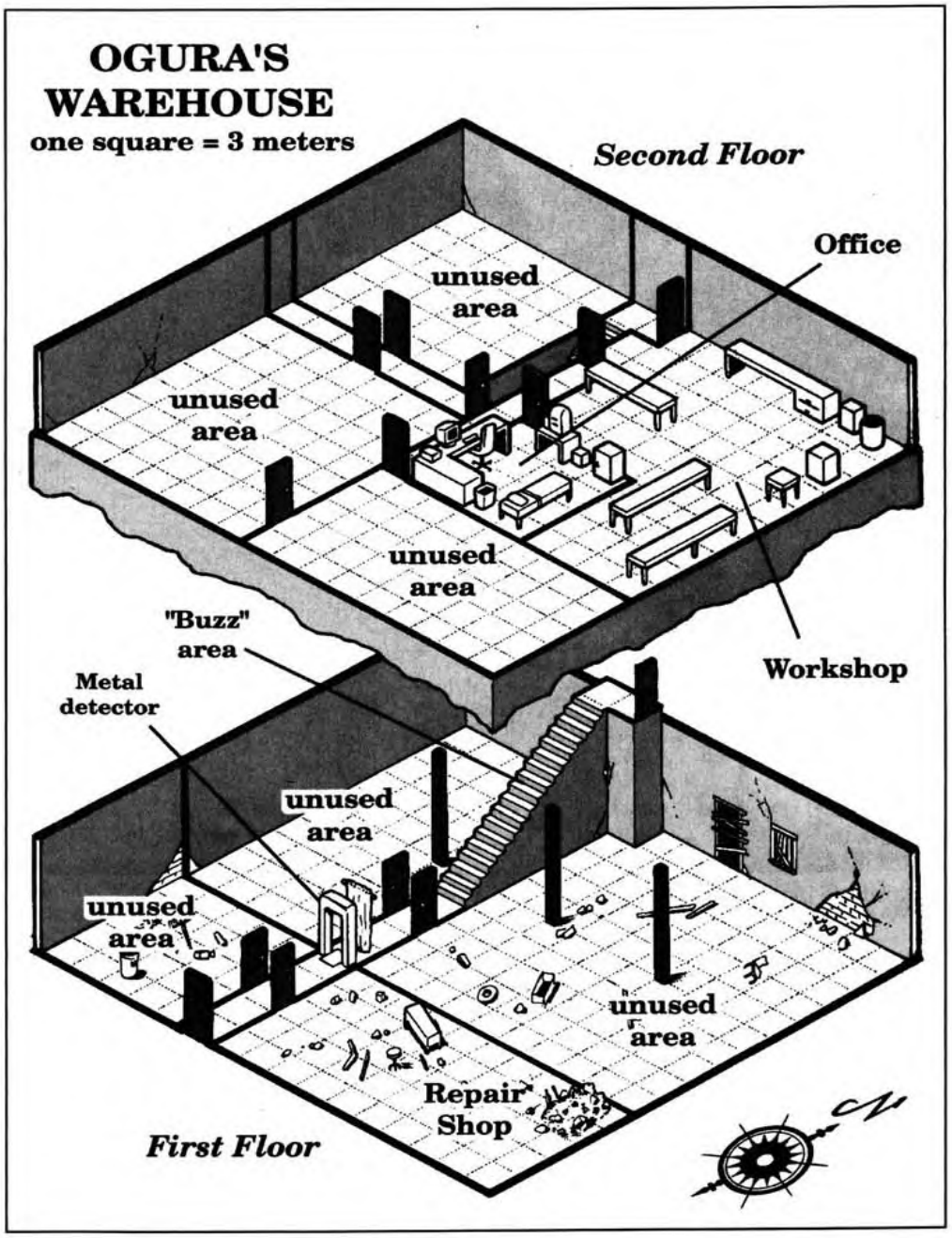
Ogura

Kaoru Ogura is willing to believe that the heroes aren't sandmen, especially now that he's seen them up close, but he still has to be convinced that they're not trying to set him up—either to arrest or kill him. Again, an Interaction or Deception check is called for if the heroes intend to pass themselves off as buyers. If they succeed, Ogura takes their money, gives them four needler pistols, and tells them to get out.

On the other hand, if the heroes admit that they're not Ogura's customers, he's willing to listen to what they have to say—but from the safety of his "office," a small, cluttered room loaded with computer equipment, emergency rations, a cot, and a small refrigerator. Ogura keeps the door closed while he talks.

The heroes can try nearly any tack they desire, but Ogura is interested only in his own future welfare: "I want a Corvette! And a house in Malibu! And I want to win the ... the ... Indiana State Lottery! You fix it so I get what I want, I'll tell you whatever you want to know!" Ogura rabidly rationalizes that he deserves everything he wants, and he's fairly intractable. He refuses to budge until the heroes have verified that they can get him what he's demanding.

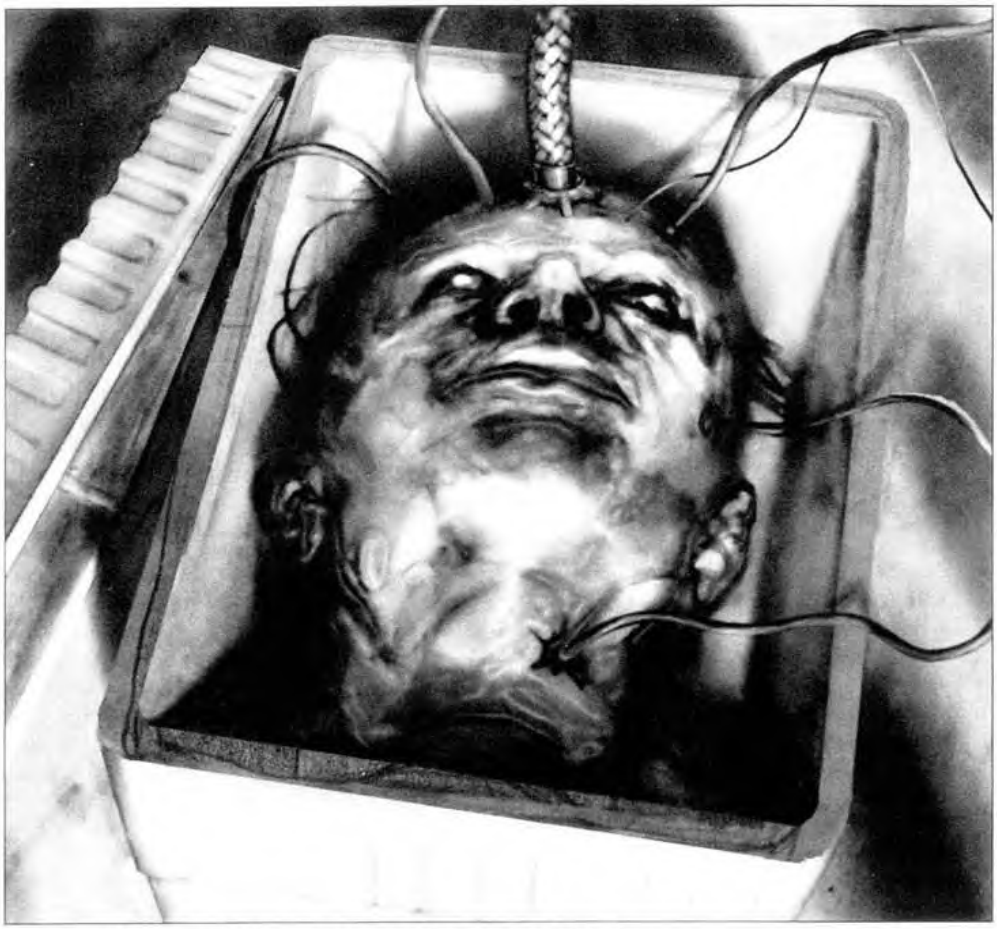
If the heroes don't at least try to bargain with him, he won't come out. One of the heroes needs to attempt an Interaction–*bargain* skill check, but without proof that they "deliver the goods," the check suffers a +3 step penalty. While these negotiations are going on, however, more guests arrive at Ogura's door.



Uninvited Guests

Unknown to either Ogura or the Hoffmann Institute agents surveilling him, a group of sandmen have been staking out the warehouse as well. They were actually under the impression that he had escaped them earlier by getting off Pan Am Flight 315 before it left the gate, and they have been looking for him there. But on the chance that Ogura slipped out of their dragnet, they have had three sandmen waiting here for him to return. When the heroes arrived and spoke to Ogura through the intercom, the sandmen picked up the conversation on a parabolic microphone and learned that he was already home.

While the heroes have been haggling with Ogura, the sandmen have been in contact



A paranoid arms dealer manages to keep a cool head.

with the other sandmen looking for him, and they are now prepared to approach the building and eliminate Ogura. Their orders are to eliminate Ogura's "buyers" as well.

The sandmen take a few moments to prepare, arming themselves with silenced pistols and two stun grenades each, in addition to their needler pistols. (See the "Sandmen Weapons" sidebar for weapon statistics.) They don't want to take anything more destructive because they know that Ogura is an arms dealer, and his warehouse will be loaded with explosives—they're not interested in vaporizing themselves if they don't have to. Similarly, they need to verify that Ogura is dead, so they can't simply blow up the entire building. One of the sandmen also carries a police-band radio, to which he is connected directly. (More on that below.)

Once they are armed, the sandmen simply leave their office and cross the street to Ogura's warehouse, where two of them stand watch while the third reshapes his body to force his finger into the peephole. (As he does this, that camera goes black on Ogura's monitors, but Ogura notices only if he has locked himself inside his "office.") He then begins feeling around inside the door for a way to open it. After 4 rounds, he locates the button that controls the door from the inside, and he presses it. One round later, he and his companions enter the warehouse.

During this time, heroes watching outside the warehouse see three men in dark suits approach the door. With a successful Awareness–*perception* check at a +3 step penalty, the hero can actually see the sandman push his finger into the peephole (though the hero can only guess what that means). Heroes outside are free to confront the sandmen or otherwise react, but remember that the heroes inside will have left their cellular phones on the floor along with the rest of their gear; calling them on their cellphones is not an option.

If they are not intercepted, the sandmen close the door behind them and move down the hall, stopping just short of the metal detector. They take a moment to examine it before the first of them passes through, setting off the detector. (Upstairs, an alarm sounds in Ogura's workshop, and if he wasn't already aware of the sandmen, he is now.) The sandmen then hurry through the curtain and begin running upstairs (ignoring the harsh buzzing noise on the stairs, since it isn't affecting them in any way), planning to catch Ogura before he leaves by a possible second exit.

As soon as Ogura realizes that sandmen are inside the building, he attempts to bargain with the heroes to save his life. The heroes can make another Interaction–*bargain* skill check, this time with a –3 step bonus; Ogura is desperate. All he wants now is to be taken to a safehouse, where the "inorganics" can't get him. But he's not so desperate that he's not thinking; he promises the heroes whatever they ask but plans to weasel out of delivering if he survives the sandman attack.

If the bargaining session results in a Critical Failure, Ogura locks himself in his office and hopes for the best. If the *bargain* check fails, Ogura dickers with the heroes until the sandmen arrive. If the check succeeds, though, Ogura tells the heroes that there are two 7.62mm assault rifles under one of the floorboards; he points it out, then locks himself in the office.

The sandmen arrive at Ogura's workshop 2 rounds after they set off the metal detector. One of them watches the stairs, while the other two enter the workshop and begin looking for Ogura, largely ignoring the heroes—unless, of course, the heroes attack them or are visibly armed. If Ogura is still in the workshop at this point, he runs for the office.

When the sandmen are killed or rendered unconscious, they begin dissolving immediately. Everything, including their weapons and gear, is gone within 1 round. Ogura, if he's there to see it, only glances at the spectacle of the dissolving sandmen. (After all, he's seen it before, and he already has a souvenir of the experience.)

If the sandman watching the stairs is still alive 4 rounds after shots are fired, he intercepts a police dispatcher call to investigate the shots fired at Ogura's warehouse. The heroes can attempt an Awareness–*perception* check to notice this. The sandman, physically plugged into the police-band radio, begins speaking with the dispatcher's voice: "All units, vicinity of Racine and 25th: shots fired. Proceed with caution; SWAT unit available for backup." Then the sandman responds, in the voice of a policeman: "Roger, dispatch. This is Unit 23 responding. ETA two minutes. Over." In addition to being sufficiently eerie, this tells the heroes that they don't have long before the police arrive.

If Ogura still hasn't agreed to go with the heroes, the heroes can attempt one more

Interaction–*bargain* check with him. If Ogura knows that police are on their way, the heroes gain another –1 step bonus to the check. Only on a Critical Failure will Ogura decide to remain. Otherwise, the better the success, the more cooperative Ogura will be; at some point, however, it occurs to him to lose the heroes and strike out on his own.

Once Ogura agrees to go with the heroes, he wants to take along only two items: his laptop computer and his plastic Igloo cooler. He guards both items as though they were made of gold. The computer, he says, is too expensive to leave behind, and the cooler contains all of his dirty laundry. If anyone wants to take a look, he tells them in no uncertain terms how badly it smells. ("That's why I have to keep it in an airtight cooler.")

Scene 3: Getting Away with Ogura

Assuming the heroes manage to get Ogura out of his warehouse before the police arrive—and they don't simply overpower him and take away his computer and cooler—Field Director Doyle tells them that he can arrange a safehouse. Unfortunately, the closest unoccupied one is in Idaho.

Ogura is happy to go to a safehouse in Idaho ("People speak English in Idaho, right?"), but he absolutely refuses to travel there in an aircraft. "The inorganics have a satellite that shoots bursts of EMP! They use it to shoot airplanes out of the sky! Just last year, they shot down a jet over Florida! Everybody on board was killed!" He has a similar objection to automobiles. "Don't you read the newspapers? Even if the inorganics couldn't just fry the electronics and crash the car, the number of fatalities from auto accidents is unacceptable!"

Ogura suggests taking a train to Idaho. Doyle doesn't have any objection to this; the heroes won't have to pass through a metal detector, so they can take their weapons along, making it easier to defend Ogura if things turn sour. They can also purchase tickets without having to show identification.

Doyle does not feel that Ogura's logic is entirely sound, but he's not going to argue about it if means they'll lose Ogura. He just wants to make sure that once the heroes get to the safehouse, they can question the arms dealer at their leisure.

Doyle makes a telephone call, and the tickets are waiting for the heroes when they arrive at the train station. Their compartments, in the sleeper section, are spread over three cars, but the heroes board the train and settle in with no problem. They can split up into the two-passenger compartments however they like, and although Ogura is keen to have a compartment to himself, he doesn't put up an argument if the heroes assign him a "roommate."

The train leaves the station shortly after the heroes arrive. As it is pulling out, each hero can attempt an Awareness–*perception* check, with a –1 step bonus if they specifically stated they were watching out the windows. On a successful check, they see four men in dark suits arrive on the boarding platform, just a few moments too late to catch the train. On an Amazing check, the hero sees the men jump onto the tracks and chase the train until it leaves them behind.

Ogura's Secret

With not much else to do aboard the train, the heroes might decide to try to learn as much about the arms dealer as possible, especially what's in the cooler. Ogura isn't interested in talking, but unless the heroes are particularly lax in their security, he can't exactly get away from them.

Polite conversation with Ogura doesn't get the heroes anywhere; he's extremely evasive, and has had a lot of practice keeping his big secret. The heroes could simply overpower Ogura and take away his computer and cooler, of course, or they could try drugging him. Psionic heroes might choose to read his mind. One way or another, the heroes can use this time to discover that Ogura has a sandman's head in his cooler and a program on his computer that allows him to speak with it. There are three main methods of discovering Ogura's secrets. The results of each method are discussed below:

Interrogating Ogura

Using Investigate–*interrogate* to pry Ogura's secret out of him is a complex skill check, and the heroes can attempt it only if they physically restrain him. (Otherwise, he hides in the bathroom, claiming to be ill.) The attempt requires 5 successes, and Ogura's +1 Will resistance modifier applies to each check. Checks can be attempted once each hour.

3 failures: Ogura clams up and tries to escape at the first opportunity.

1 success: Ogura discovered that the inorganics were trying to find him, so he purchased a ticket on Pan Am Flight 315 to see what they would do if they knew (or thought they knew) where he was. When he found out, he holed up in his warehouse, waiting for the heat to die down.

Sandmen Weapons

The weapons carried by the sandmen in Scenes 2 and 3 are described in the DARK•MATTER *Arms & Equipment Guide*, but the essentials are included below:

Silenced Pistol: Skill Modern–*pistol*; Acc 0; Md F; Range 6/12/40; Type HI/O; Damage d4w/d4+1w/d4–1m; Actions 3; Clip 8; Hide +1; Mass 1 kg; Availability: Military; Cost $1,300+.

Stun Grenade: Skill Athletics–*throw*; Acc +1; Md F; Range per STR; Type LI/G; Damage: d4s/d6s/d6+2s; Actions 2; Clip n/a; Hide +3; Mass 0.5 kg; Availability: Controlled; Cost $100.

These are "flash-bang" grenades that explode with a loud noise and a magnesium flash. Targets within 2 meters suffer Amazing damage. Those within 2–6 meters suffer Good damage. Those within 6–10 meters suffer Ordinary Damage.

Anyone who detects the stun grenade before it detonates can attempt a Dexterity feat check at a +3 step penalty to turn away before the flash. With a Marginal result, the hero is blinded, taking a +3 step penalty to subsequent actions for d4+1 rounds. On an Ordinary result, all actions requiring sight are at a +2 step penalty. A Good result reduces the penalty to +1 step, and an Amazing result eliminates the penalty altogether.

Franchi SPAS-12 Shotgun: Skill Modern–*rifle*; Acc 0; Md F; Range 6/12/30; Type HI/O; Damage d4w/d6w/d4m; Actions 2; Clip 8; Hide n/a; Mass 3 kg; Availability Common; Cost $500.

Sandman Needler Gun: Skill Modern–*pistol*; Acc 0; Md F; Range 2/6/12; Type special; Damage special; Actions 4; Clip 20; Hide +3; Mass 1 kg; Availability Restricted; Cost $1,500 (sedative-loaded version).

More common than the version that fires darts coated with morpheotoxin (see Chapter 8: Xenoforms in the *DARK•MATTER Campaign Setting*) is a version of the sandman needler pistol that fires needles loaded with sedatives. Anyone wounded by a needle must make a Constitution feat check to fight off the effects of the sedative (a +2 step penalty to all action checks and actions). An Ordinary success reduces the penalty by 1 step, while a Good or Amazing success negates the penalty.

2 successes: Ogura makes the needler pistols himself, from a design provided for him by an inorganic. The plans are in a password-protected file on his laptop, but he won't give the heroes the password. Some of the components are volatile, and he keeps them in this lead-lined cooler. (Any hero who makes a successful Knowledge–*deduce* check can see that Ogura is not strong enough to pick up a lead-lined container that large.)

3 successes: Ogura has a complete list of all of the people to whom he's sold needler pistols. The list is in another password-protected file on his computer. Again, he won't surrender the password, though he might make a copy of the file for the heroes.

4 successes: The cooler actually contains the remains of the inorganic who gave Ogura the schematics for the pistols. The remains are highly contagious, though, and opening the cooler without proper biohazard gear would be suicidal.

5 successes: The remains in the cooler aren't dangerous at all, and Ogura can demonstrate how to communicate with the head by connecting it to the computer and starting up a specific program. (See "Talking To the Head" below.)

The Computer

Ogura's computer uses Microsoft Windows 2000, and the default language is Japanese (which heroes can change with a successful Knowledge–*computer operation* check). A successful Knowledge–*computer operation* skill check discovers a program on the desktop, labeled simply "Talk." The program is password-protected, but Ogura isn't the brightest computer user in the world: The password is "Kaoru." If the heroes don't guess it, a successful Computer Science–*hacking* skill check discovers it.

When the program starts, it displays a wire-frame graphic of a human head spinning in place. (The spinning stops when the computer is connected to the sandman head.) The command menu includes "Text" (allowing communication via the keyboard, rather than through the microphone and speakers); "Save" (allowing the user to keep information from the head as a file); and "Print" (allowing the user to print information instead of saving it). The program is really no more complex than that. Communicating with the head requires only that the head be connected to the computer's serial port; until it is, an error message reads "Device not found."

The Cooler

The cooler is a completely ordinary plastic cooler, with buttons on the sides that release the lid, allowing it to swivel open. It is not radioactive, cold, hot, or otherwise indicative in any fashion that it contains anything other than what Ogura says.

Inside the cooler, the sandman's head rests in a Styrofoam mold. Initially, it appears to be a badly-painted mannequin's head. Then it opens its eyes and looks at anyone who is looking at it.

Talking To the Head

Once the head is connected to the computer and the proper program is started, the heroes can communicate with the head. Initially, it merely looks at the heroes. If they say nothing, it closes its eyes and pretends to be inert. But as soon as they ask it a question, the head responds. Its mouth doesn't move, though—it communicates entirely through the microphone and speaker on the computer.

The head is mostly curious about who is speaking to it. If the heroes admit they are with the Hoffmann Institute, the head feigns ignorance of the group. And unless they refer to it as a sandman, it claims to be a discarded piece of technology: "I was an experiment to create a lifelike robot. I remember being in a laboratory, then 'waking up' in Ogura's workshop. I do not know who my creators were."

Only by indicating that they know the head is all that remains of a sandman will the heroes be able to communicate openly with it. The head gets right to the point: "What do you want?"

If they haven't really thought about it, they might want to consult with Doyle. His suggestion is that they don't talk to the head at all; sandman are known to be very persuasive. Instead, Doyle recommends that they turn the head over to the Institute when they reach the safehouse. He'll be waiting there to collect it. (Unknown to either Doyle or the heroes, though, the sandmen are using a cellular telephone interceptor to search for cellular conversations that mention Ogura, the sandmen, or the Hoffmann Institute, and they tune in on the conversation.)

The head happily tells them the story of its association with Ogura—how the arms dealer discovered it in the process of dissolution and managed to hit just the right combination of chemicals to halt the process: "I was involved in a battle, and I believe I was killed. But then I restarted in Ogura's workshop, and he was asking me how to create needler pistols." The head reluctantly agreed to give Ogura the schematics, which Ogura transferred to the computer. Since then, Ogura has been pressing it for more information about technological wonders he can sell, but the head, unfortunately, doesn't have any other information: "I am only the equivalent of a footsoldier."

If the heroes ask the head about the sandmen, it pretends that it can't remember. "Ogura's chemical bath didn't stop the nanites before they dissolved large portions of my processing unit." Similarly, the head claims to remember little of the sandmen, aside from its last mission.

Getting the head to really "open up" will be extremely difficult, because what the head really wants is to be destroyed—to prevent any more information about the sandmen from falling into the hands of humans—and so physical torture means nothing to it. The only thing it really fears is being immersed in water (something Ogura has never thought of). If the heroes immerse it in water while it is connected to the computer, the resulting electrical reaction destroys the computer's processor.

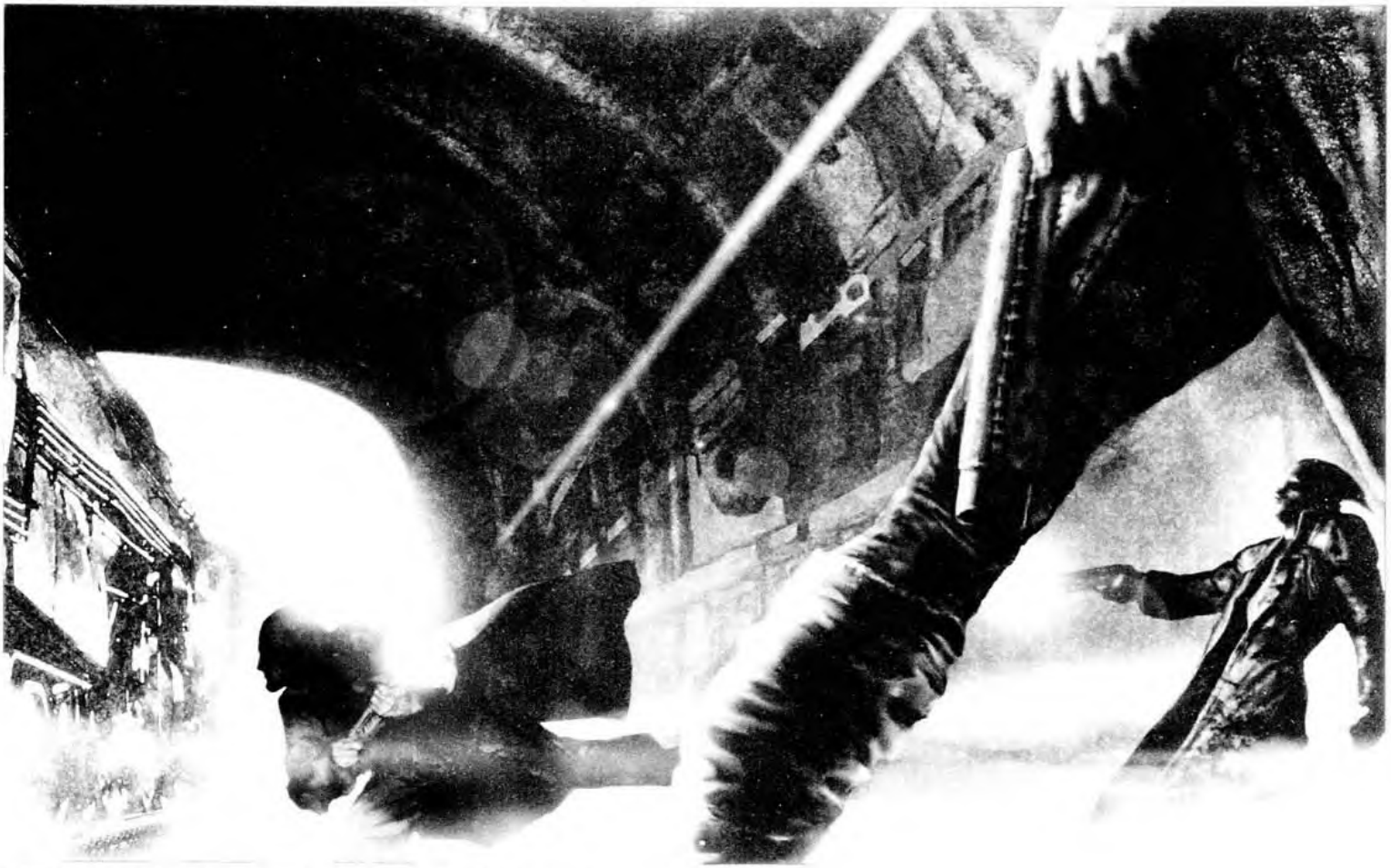
The head itself is interested in how it can turn this new situation to its advantage. It wants to be returned to the sandmen or, at the very least, destroyed. If it can convince the heroes to do either, it promises them a great deal—though, like Ogura, it has no intention of actually making good on its promises.

Eventually, the heroes should realize that the head, while a fascinating curiosity, isn't going to voluntarily deliver any big secrets about the sandmen to them. In time, they might be able to use Computer Science–*hacking* to download the contents of its memory to a computer, but the project could take months, if not years.

The Sandmen Return

If the heroes remain aboard the train long enough, it enters the Cascades, the part of the Rocky Mountain range that runs through Oregon. Aside from marching up and down the train aisles, being generally watchful and alert, there isn't much to do except talk to the head, eat, and look at the passing scenery. The heroes can explore the train, but they're not going to find anything aboard more fascinating than the contents of Ogura's cooler.

The sandmen, meanwhile, have been trying to intercept and board the train, with no luck. After several failed attempts, they have finally decided to throw caution to the wind and simply stop the train, locate Ogura, and kill anyone who gets in their way. Of course, if the heroes have already disembarked from the



Sandmen headhunters gun down their elusive quarry.

train, the Gamemaster can either ignore this final encounter or adapt it to fit the circumstances.

As the train is passing through a tunnel, the sandmen use explosives to trigger an avalanche. When the locomotive emerges from the tunnel, it is suddenly buried in a thousand tons of snow and felled trees. But because the avalanche came from above the tunnel opening, the train is not derailed but merely stopped, albeit violently.

Each hero aboard the train needs to make a successful Acrobatics–*fall* check to avoid being hurt in the impact. (If the hero can first make a successful Awareness–*intuition* check, he or she gains a –1 step bonus on the Acrobatics–*fall* check.) On a Critical Failure, the hero suffers d8+2 mortal damage; on a failure, the damage is d6+2m. On an Ordinary success, the hero suffers d4+1m; on a Good success, the damage is d6+2w; and on an Amazing success, the damage is d4+1w.

Armor applies normally to reduce the damage. If the hero is seated (as most heroes in compartments will be), downgrade the damage (mortal to wound, wound to stun). If the player has specifically stated that her hero is secured, downgrade the damage twice (mortal to stun, wound to no damage).

Immediately after the train comes to its sudden stop, the lights in the cars go out, and emergency lighting comes on. (Remember, most of the train is still in the tunnel.) The heroes begin hearing the screams of wounded passengers, and the aisles begin filling with people shouting for help or just wondering what's happened.

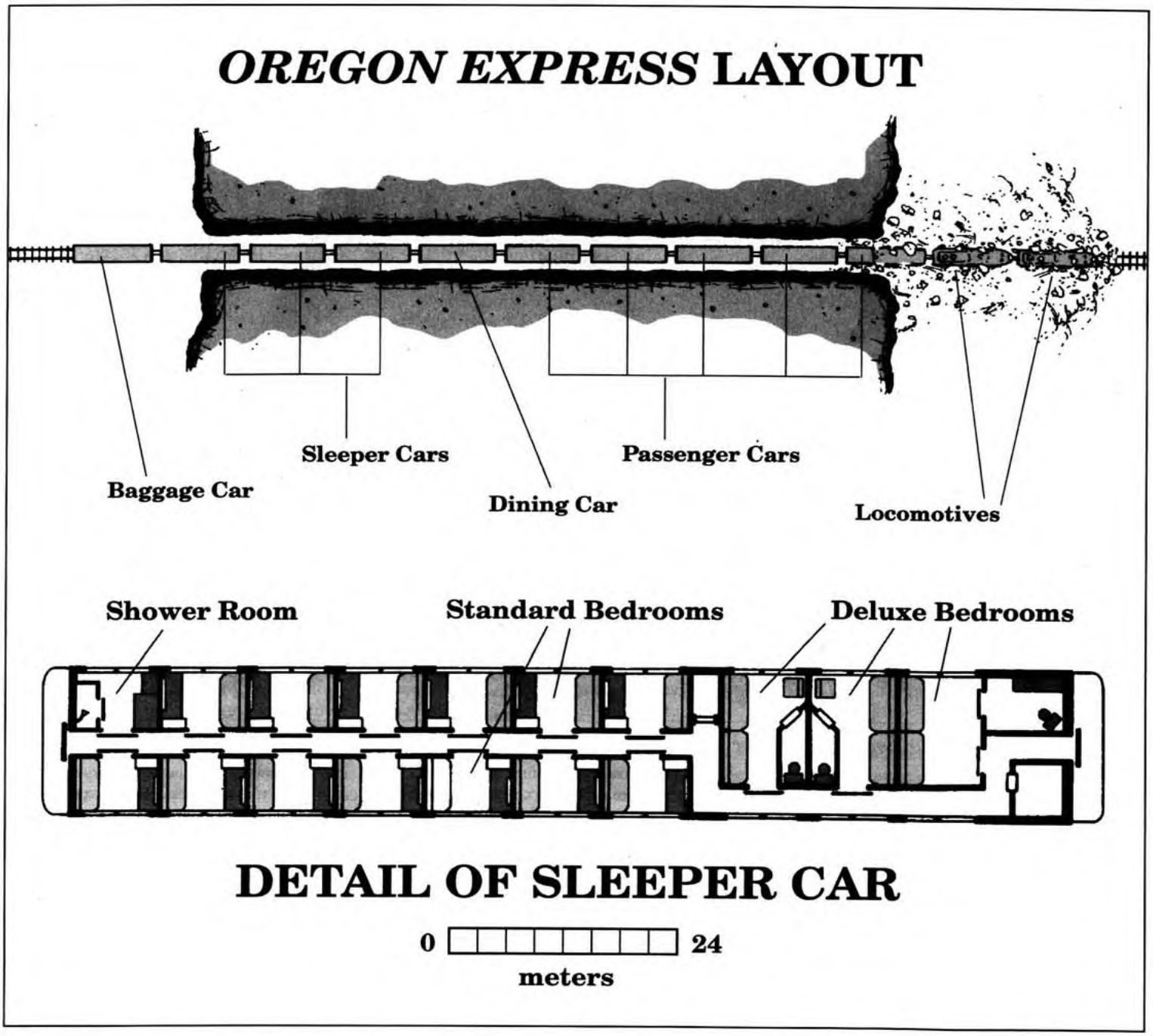
If Ogura was conscious up until this point, he isn't now. He lies on the floor, eyes closed. If the heroes haven't yet taken the cooler or computer away from him, he is still hanging onto them for dear life. A hero who makes a successful Knowledge–*first aid* check can determine that Ogura is only feigning unconsciousness. (He's looking for a chance to escape the heroes.)

The other thing the heroes might notice is the approach of the sandmen from the other end of the tunnel. Let each hero attempt an Awareness–*perception* check; if the roll is successful, they see several figures hurrying their way, silhouetted in the light from the end of the tunnel. They will reach the last car of the train in 2 rounds.

Showdown on the Oregon Express

The sandmen are here to kill Ogura, and this time, they intend to make certain he's dead. Four sandmen board the train and begin moving toward the front, killing any adult male with Japanese features, attacking anyone carrying a weapon, and using their needler pistols on everyone else. Meanwhile, another four sandmen follow their progress from either side of the train, two to a side, performing essentially the same procedure with anyone who has disembarked in the tunnel.

Each sandman is armed with a Franchi SPAS-12 shotgun with an under-slung flashlight. (See the "Sandmen Weapons" sidebar



for details.) They can clearly see everyone in the tunnel, but the heroes can also see them, and given the sounds of the shots, the heroes can also make a fair guess what's going on.

The sandmen take 2 rounds to clear each car, assuming they don't meet the heroes in the car. When they do encounter the heroes, the sandmen change tactics slightly: Two sandmen from outside the train (one from each side) move ahead to board the car from the front. This puts four sandmen at the rear of the car, two at the front, and two outside.

If the sandmen manage to kill Ogura, they change their objective to locating the head. Once they have it, they leave the tunnel and depart. They also depart if at least one of them personally witnesses the head's destruction and conveys that information to the others. Also, if the sandmen lose three or more of their number, they withdraw to the tunnel entrance, where they wait for survivors of the accident to emerge, then gun them down.

The heroes are definitely cornered in the tunnel, since digging out of the other end without heavy digging equipment requires at least a day's work.

The heroes suffer another disadvantage: Cellular phones can only communicate with other cellular phones inside the tunnel—the phone signals do not reach outside the tunnel.

The sandmen are not interested in any negotiation that does not put Ogura and the head in their hands.

To make matters worse, should Ogura ever be left alone, he tries to escape. His simplistic plan is to try to take the head, or at least his computer, and climb under the train, where he hopes to hide while he crawls all the way to the back of the train. Once he gets there, he makes a run for it (unless, of course, he sees other passengers being shot by sandmen waiting outside). On the off chance the heroes actually lose track of Ogura long enough for him to pull this off, the heroes have a hard time finding him again—his natural good luck leads him right to an access road, a parked car, and freedom. (The Gamemaster might want to leave Ogura's fate open; he could make an amusing recurring character, as a small-time hustler who keeps becoming embroiled in secret plots and conspiracies and running afoul of the Hoffmann Institute.)

The battle ends when the heroes either dispatch or lose the sandmen. If the heroes have suffered mortal wounds, they can find a mostly unhurt doctor aboard the train who can stabilize them before emergency teams arrive. Once outside the tunnel, the heroes can also contact the Hoffmann Institute, apprising them of the situation. Field Director Doyle arranges to pick them up as soon as possible.

Debriefing

After the heroes have returned to the Portland office, Doyle gets the heroes' accounts of what happened after he last saw them. If the heroes managed to capture the sandman head or the computer, he's thrilled with their success (unless they lost agents in the process). Capturing a "live" sandman—even if it's just the head—is a major coup for the Hoffmann Institute, and they can use it to learn a great deal about the etoile (the sandmen's creators).

Doyle is less thrilled with custody of Kaoru Ogura but considers it at least a partial victory.

Achievement Points

Award the heroes 1 achievement point if they managed to capture Ogura, or 2 achievement points if they retrieved his computer (with or without Ogura). If the heroes brought back the sandman head, regardless of whether they also secured Ogura and his computer, each hero should receive 3 achievement points. Also, ask the players which of them they feel did the best roleplaying. Award that hero 1 achievement point. Ω

Sandman Game Data

STR	10	(2d6+3)	Int	10	(2d6+3)
DEX	9	(2d6+2)	WIL	7	(2d6)
CON	11	(2d6+4)	PER	8	(2d6+1)

Durability: 11/11/6/6
Action Check: 14+/13/6/3
Move: sprint 20, run 12, walk 4
#Actions: 2
Reaction Score: Ordinary/2
Last Resorts: 1

Attacks

Unarmed	14/7/3	d4s/d4+1s/d4+2s	LI/O
Melee weapon	10/5/2	varies	varies
Ranged weapon	13/6/3	varies	varies

Defenses
+1 resistance modifier vs. melee attacks
–4 step bonus to CON feat checks made to resist toxins

Skills
Armor Operation* [10]; Athletics [10]; Melee* [10]; Unarmed [10]–*brawl [14]*; Modern [9]–*pistol [13]*; Vehicle [9]–*land [10]*; Stamina [11]–*blood music*** *[12]*; Computer* [10]–*hacking [12], hardware [12], programming [14]*; Knowledge [10]–*language (English) [13]*; Security [10]–*devices [12]*; System Operation* [10]; Tactics [10]; Technical [10]–*juryrig [13], repair [12]*; Awareness [7]; Culture [8]; Interaction [8]–*charm [10]*.

* The sandman's fusion ability grants a –1 step bonus to the use of this skill.
** The sandman's *blood music* skill is fully detailed in the *DARK•MATTER Campaign Setting*, Chapter 8: Xenoforms.

The typical sandman stands about 1.8 meters tall and weighs about 90 kilograms. The superficial similarity between humans and these nanite-corrupted humans allows sandmen to pass for humans. Only close inspection reveals some major differences. Veins of metal are interwoven with flesh and blood, and sandman hair often displays a metallic sheen, like hair that has been poorly dyed. Unlike humans who have undergone surgery to install an artificial limb, a sandman's form looks completely natural—the synthesis of flesh and biomechanics appears seamless.

Sandmen are nearly immune to poisons of all kinds. However, they are susceptible to electrical damage and short-circuiting due to immersion in liquid. If a sandman becomes submerged in a conducting solution (water, acid, or liquid hydrogen, for example), it must make a successful Stamina–*endurance* check each round of immersion or suffer d4s damage. On a Critical Failure, the sandman suffers d4w damage instead. Note that complete immersion is required to cause this damage; merely splashing water on a sandman has no effect.

The sandmen also possess the ability to reshape their bodies. This mimics the effect of the Biokinesis–*morph* psionic skill; treat sandmen as if they possessed all *morph* rank benefits through rank 7, though no skill check is required. In addition, they can fuse with inorganic objects, actually becoming one with the object. Among other effects, this grants the sandmen a –1 step bonus to Armor Operation, Melee Weapons, Computer Science, and System Operation skill checks when fused with such an object. Minor reshaping (including fusing with handheld objects) requires a single round, while major reshaping (including deforming to pass through narrow openings) requires d4+1 rounds.

Due to a modification to their vocal chords, sandmen can incorporate low-frequency radio waves in their voices. This hypnotic quality grants them a –3 step bonus to the use of any Interaction specialty skills. This even allows them to affect characters with Hostile attitudes. They ignore the +2 step penalty when using Interaction skills against humans.

Sandmen cannot fuse with organic materials such as wood or leather; attempting to do so disrupts the sandman's own organic systems (which attempt to feed nutrients to the dead organic matter through veins), inflicting d4–2s damage. Also, a sandman cannot fuse with objects covered in a film of water or oil.

SIDETREKS

THE

BY PETER HOPKINS

Artwork by Brad McDevitt
Cartography by Chris Perkins

"The Trouble with Trillochs" is an AD&D® scenario for 4–5 PCs of levels 6–9 (about 35 total levels). The adventure takes place in a remote region of a small duchy, the details of which are left deliberately vague.

The adventure uses three monsters from the *PLANESCAPE® MONSTROUS COMPENDIUM® Appendices* (Volumes II and III). The DM should review the descriptions of the trilloch, sword spirit, and xeg-yi before running the scenario.

Adventure Background

Fifty years ago, the necromancer Sormun Knellsong was banished from his homeland for animating the dead. Rather than plunder remote cemeteries for the corpses he required and incur the wrath of local authorities, he found a battlefield located on the border of two warring duchies and looted the field for body parts and bones. He built a small hovel not too far from the battlefield and lived there for many years, stealing bones and sending his *animated* minions abroad to terrorize wayfarers and steal treasure.

Sormun soon outgrew his small dwelling and paid a clan of pech to construct an subterranean lair in the hills near the battlefield. The pech were paid handsomely for their efforts, and the greediest pech remained with Sormun after the lair was complete.

After years spent animating the dead and pillaging the tradeways, Sormun eventually tired of creating mindless undead minions. He found a way to summon a trilloch to the Prime Material plane and trapped the creature in the heart of his lair. Sormun had hoped to use the trilloch's negative energy to infuse a potion that would transform him into a shadow demon. For a while, the caravan attacks ceased as Sormun devoted more time to completing the potion. The pech, who wanted the caravan raids to continue, tired of Sormun's musings. Driven by the trilloch to commit violence, they killed the necromancer and began raiding the tradeways themselves, using their powers of *stone shape, wall of stone, stone tell,* and *flesh to stone* to best effect.

Sormun's research into the nature of trillochs was haphazard, and he was unaware of the trilloch's ability to incite violence in others. Although his magical *amulet of negative plane protection* rendered him immune, the pech had no such protection and succumbed. Today, the trilloch presses the pech toward new acts of violence. The pech continue to use the necromancer's abode as their lair, despite the potential danger to themselves.

Beginning the Adventure

The scenario can begin in one of several ways. A couple suggestions are presented below:

☛ The duke asks the PCs to investigate a series of bandit attacks perpetrated against caravans along a poorly guarded trade route. Wagons have been halted by mysteriously appearing *walls of stone*, and some travelers have been transformed into statues! Caravan guards and merchants not turned to stone have been found crushed beneath boulders, their wagons half-sunk in mud. (This is the work of a galeb duhr and the evil pech.)

☛ The PCs are hired by the duke, a local historian, or a wealthy family to recover a magical sword lost in battle against the forces of a rival duchy. The blade is believed to lie with the remains of its former wielder some-

TROUBLE WITH TRILLOCHS

where on the "haunted battlefield" near the border of the two feuding duchies. (The battlefield is close to Sormun's abode.)

☛ While traveling a seldom traversed trade road, the PCs are accosted by the evil pech brigands and their galeb duhr ally. After surviving the encounter, the PCs discover a map hewn into the surface of one of the galeb duhr's *animated* boulders. The boulder, formerly a way-marker, provides clues to the whereabouts of a great battlefield.

The Evil Pech

If the PCs are investigating the bandit attacks or traveling a lonely trade road, they might encounter the evil pech and their galeb duhr ally. If the PCs have been hired to search the battlefield for a missing sword, they might encounter the pech and the galeb duhr near the necromancer's lair or near the battlefield.

There are eight pech. Unlike normal pech, these creatures are hateful and wicked. Years spent with Sormun coupled with the violent compulsions of the trilloch have forever transformed them. The pech are armed with picks and have the equivalent of 18/50 Strength.

The galeb duhr once guarded the entrance to Sormun's domicile. It, too, was corrupted and driven toward violence by the trilloch. The galeb duhr's alliance with the pech is tenuous, but its fear of their *stone shape* ability prevents the galeb duhr from turning against them when other prey is available. The pech communicate with the galeb duhr and its *animated* boulders using *stone tell* spells.

During ambushes, the galeb duhr appears as nothing more than a large rock formation near the road. The pech use the galeb duhr for cover while they cast spells, springing out from behind it once their prey enters striking range of their picks. While these tactics aren't sophisticated, their high Armor Class, magic resistance, and impressive spell-like abilities make them deadly foes.

Pech (8): AC 3; MV 9; HD 4; hp 29, 27, 24 (×3), 22, 21, 20; THAC0 17 (16 with Strength bonus); #AT 1; Dmg 1d6+3 (pick with Strength bonus); SA cast *stone shape* and *stone tell* (each 4/day), four pech can cast *wall of stone* (1/day), eight pech can cast *flesh to stone* or *stone to flesh* (1/day); SD immune to petrification; MR 25%; SZ S (4' tall); ML 17; Int average (10); AL NE; XP 1,400; *MM*/102.

Galeb duhr: AC –2; MV 6; HD 10; hp 55; THAC0 11; #AT 2; Dmg 4–24/4–24; SA animate 1–2 boulders within 60 yards, spell-like abilities (see below); SD immune to lightning and normal fire, +4 to saving throws vs. magical fire; SW suffer double damage (and a –4 penalty to saving throws) vs. cold-based attacks; MR 20%; SZ L (12' tall); ML 17; Int very (11); AL NE; XP 10,000; *MM*/122.

Spell-like abilities, each usable one/day: *move earth, passwall, transmute rock to mud, wall of stone*. It can cast *stone shape* at will. All spell-like abilities are cast at the 20th level of ability.

***Animated* boulders** (2): AC 0; MV 3; HD 9; hp 45 each; THAC0 11; #AT 1; Dmg 4–24; SD immune to mind-affecting attacks; SZ L; ML nil; Int non (0); AL nil; XP 1,400.

The Battlefield

Located on the border of two feuding duchies, nestled among sparsely wooded hills, is a battlefield nearly 1 mile in diameter. Several great battles have been fought here, and the remains of hundreds of soldiers litter the ground. Locals believe the battlefield is haunted, but the politicians who fight over this disputed territory place little stock in such reports. PCs cresting the surrounding hills spot the battlefield instantly: a misty valley of trampled grass and marshlands. Littering the wet earth are hundreds of human and demihuman skeletons (and portions thereof), many of them decked in tattered garments and rusted pieces of armor. Shattered swords, spears, pikes, shields, and helms lie among the bones. Amid these rusted remains explorers can find torn banners and animal tracks.

The mist hangs like a shroud over the battlefield day and night, and an eerie chill fills the air. Silvery fireflies flit among the reeds day and night like witchlight. These elements, more than anything else, have led visitors to believe that the battlefield is haunted.

Each turn the PCs spend searching the battlefield has a noncumulative 10% chance of attracting the attention of a sword spirit. Once it senses the presence of living, sentient beings on the battlefield, the sword spirit requires 1d4 rounds to "form," eventually revealing itself as a swirling whirlwind comprised of shattered weapons, armor, bone, mist, and silvery witchlight. Caught in the whirlwind are 2–7 intact swords that the sword spirit uses each round to attack living prey. The DM should roll randomly to determine the number of swords. (If the PCs have been sent to the battlefield to find a particular magical sword, one of the blades swept up by the sword spirit might be the weapon they seek.)

PCs can strike at the swords inside the whirling spirit, either freeing them from the spirit's grasp or destroying them, but this requires a successful attack roll against AC –4. One hit against a sword frees or destroys it.

The sword spirit continues to attack any living being on the battlefield. If the PCs flee the battlefield, the sword spirit vanishes after 1d4 rounds have elapsed, reforming if the battlefield is again disturbed.

Sword spirit: AC 0; MV 18; HD 9; hp 60; THAC0 11; #AT 2–7; Dmg by weapon type (1–8 for longswords); SA whirling debris (see below); SD +1 or better weapons to hit; immune to *sleep, charm*, and other mind-affecting spells; turned as vampire; SW destroyed by *dispel evil* or *raise dead* if it fails a saving throw vs. spell; MR 30%; SZ L (15' tall); ML 18; Int very (12); AL LE; XP 8,000; *Planescape MCAII*/102.

All creatures engaged in melee with the sword spirit must make a successful saving throw vs. spell each round or suffer a –2 penalty to attack rolls and AC due to the swirling debris. Those attempting to cast spells within 20 feet of the spirit must make a successful saving throw vs. spell or have their spells disrupted and ruined.

If it kills a character, the sword spirit moves over the fallen body and feeds, gaining 1 hp for each level the victim possessed in life. This process takes 1 round, during which the sword spirit can still attack anyone standing within 10 feet.

Necromancer's Lair

The necromancer's lair is embedded in a hillside at the western edge of the battlefield. At one time, the galeb duhr used its control over the surrounding rocks to conceal the entrance to Sormun's lair, but the entrance is no longer guarded as vigilantly. Anyone exploring the western fringes of the battlefield during the day quickly spots the tunnel leading into Sormun's lair near the base of the hill.

Sormun's abode was carved from the rock with the aid of pech magic. When not attacking and looting caravans, the pech dwell in areas **2–3**. (The galeb duhr is too big to fit comfortably inside the necromancer's lair, so it remains outside.) If the PCs have not yet encountered the pech and the galeb duhr, there is a 60% chance they are inside or near Sormun's abode; otherwise, they are away on a raid and won't return for 2d6 hours.

The trilloch's area of influence extends 60 feet in all directions, encompassing all of

Sormun's lair. (The shaded circle on the map indicates the full range of the trilloch's influence. Note that the area of effect is spherical and encompasses the top of Sormun's hill as well.) In this region, the trilloch amplifies the deadly potential of all combat. All attack and damage rolls receive a +1 bonus, and morale checks are made at a +3 bonus, as creatures within the trilloch's area of influence are more likely to fight to the death.

Beings of animal (1) or nonratable (0) intelligence within 60 feet of the trilloch begin attacking whatever is near (no saving throw). Smarter creatures are entitled to a saving throw vs. spell to resist the effect. If the roll fails, the affected creatures must spend the next 1d6 rounds attacking anything they perceive as an enemy. If there are no "enemies" present, they simply attack anyone nearby for 1d4 rounds. If a battle-enraged character leaves the trilloch's area of influence, the compulsion to fight ends immediately.

Creatures that successfully save against the trilloch's violence-inducing aura do not have to make another saving throw so long as they remain in the area of influence. If they leave the area and later return, a new saving throw is required. A *negative plane protection* renders the recipient immune to the trilloch's influence for the duration of the spell.

The pech are periodically overcome by the trilloch's aura and have already destroyed Sormun's skeletal guardians, as well as slain a few of their own. (See areas **2** and **3**.)

Unless otherwise noted, all doors in the lair are make of dark oak and can withstand 50 points of damage, all ceilings are 10 feet high and flat, and rooms are illuminated by dim *continual light* spells.

1. Entrance. The door to Sormun's lair is made of black oak banded with iron. Sculpted into the door is a fearsome, horned skull with hollow eyes. The iron handle is shaped like a skeletal hand.

2. Guardian Chamber. The floor of this room is littered with the bones of dozens of Sormun's skeletal guardians, all of which were destroyed by the pech. Although most of the bones are human, PCs searching the debris can find a few humanoid and demihuman skulls and bones as well. Paths cleared of bones extend from the entrance to area **3** and the doors leading to areas **4** and **7**.

3. Former Shrine. This octagonal chamber was once a shrine dedicated to Nerull, god of death. The walls have been shaped (using *stone shape* spells) into a giant bas-relief depicting a dracolich with outstretched, bony wings. The head of the dracolich emerges from the northern wall above a raised slab of stone that once served as a sacrificial altar. The altar has grooves and hemispherical indentations used to channel and catch blood from sacrifices. The surface of the altar is stained with blood.

Propped against the stone altar are the dead, rotting corpses of five pech killed by their incensed brethren. Their wounds suggest that they were killed with picks.

Hidden behind the altar are three sacks of treasure taken by the pech from passing caravans. The first sack holds 840 gp and three emeralds (worth 500 gp apiece), the second one holds 1,500 ep, and the third one contains 270 pp in a gold-plated helm adorned with a golden griffon (worth 400 gp). Hidden in the maw of the dracolich bas-relief are several items taken from wayward travelers: a silver dagger with a gem-encrusted pommel (worth 900 gp), a potion of *gaseous form*, a *ring of sustenance*, an *ioun stone* (scarlet and blue sphere; increases Intelligence by 1), and *Bucknard's everful purse*.

4. Sormun's Quarters. The necromancer's bedroom is sparsely furnished. It contains a simple wooden bed, two wolfskin rugs, a wardrobe filled with simple black robes and garments, and a chest. The chest has been broken open by the pech, its contents looted or ruined. PCs inspecting the debris find a broken lock and several torn pages from the necromancer's minor spellbook; none of the spells are salvageable.

Lying next to the wardrobe are the putrefied remains of Sormun Knellsong. He was killed by the pech long ago and left to rot. He still wears a tattered, bloody black robe and an iron *amulet of negative plane protection* shaped like a skull (a symbol of Nerull). The amulet grants its wearer *negative plane protection* for as long as the item is worn. (In life, Sormun's *amulet of negative plane protection* protected him from the trilloch's aura of violence.)

Coiled at the foot of the bed is a basilisk that appears to be sound asleep. Although this might alarm the PCs, the basilisk is, in fact, stuffed. Although a splendidly preserved trophy, the stuffed basilisk weighs 200 pounds and is very bulky.

The secret door in the south wall pivots on a central axle. However, it is trapped with a spell of Sormun's devising; any PC touching the door must make a successful saving throw vs. spell or lose 3d6 Constitution points. The pech are aware of the trap and avoid it. Once the spell is triggered, the door can be touched safely. Lost points are restored at a rate of 1 per hour; a *restoration* spell restores all lost points immediately. Any PC whose Constitution is reduced to 0 is slain.

5. Cold Storage. This damp, chilly room is where Sormun preserved his cadavers, many of which were used in grisly experiments or *animated* as undead guardians. Unlike most of Sormun's lair, the walls are roughly hewn—worked by pech picks rather than *stone shape* spells. The back wall is covered with brown mold that reduces the ambient temperature. PCs who approach with 5 feet of the mold suffer 4d8 points of damage as the heat is drained from their bodies. See the *MM* for the brown mold's statistics.

Six stone tables stand in the room. Atop one table is the partially assembled skeleton of a human male. Atop another two tables are the slowly rotting corpses of two orcs killed by Sormun years ago. Their possessions and internal organs have been removed, but they still wear bloodstained leather armor. The remaining three tables are bare.

6. Laboratory. Before his death, Sormun tried to concoct an elixir that would transform him into a shadow demon. This room contains clues to his last great endeavor: a rectangular table cluttered with alchemical equipment (alembics, mortars and pestles, bottles, a crucible, and so forth) and spoiled concoctions that look and taste like black oil. None of the potions or equipment is magical, but the alchemical apparatus is worth 1,000 gp to an interested buyer.

Sormun's spellbook (a thick book with black leather covers emblazoned with a stylized "S") rests atop a lectern carved from a single piece of deadwood resembling a gnarled claw. The tome contains 25 spells of 1st through 6th level. Most of the spells are from the Necromancy school, but the DM can determine the exact contents. In addition to spells, the tome contains vague instructions for creating a potion that transforms the imbiber into a shadow demon. Creating such a potion requires ingredients worth no less than 1,000 gp and a successful Herbalism proficiency check at a –6 penalty. (The vague instructions are the reason for the penalty.) A failed check spoils the brew and wastes the ingredients. Once prepared, the potion must be immersed for 60 days in pure negative energy (such as that created by the trilloch in area **10**) before it can be imbibed.

7. Kitchen. A rectangular table used for food preparation stands in the middle of this room. Against the northwest and southwest walls stand a matching set of bookshelves now used to hold utensils, jars of spices, and dishware. Between the shelving units, concealing a secret door in the west wall, is a black tapestry depicting a skull stitched with fine silver thread. Embedded in the eastern wall opposite the tapestry is a fireplace filled with soot.

The secret doors in the north and west walls are identical to the secret door in area **4**.

8. Larder. Sormun kept his food supplies in this cold, damp chamber. The walls are

roughly hewn and contain many nooks and crannies that serve as crude shelves. PCs searching the shelves find jars of preserved foodstuffs and pickled body organs (eyes, hearts, and so forth).

The niche to the west contains one of Sormun's constructs: a 9'-tall ogre zombie covered with brown mold (described in the *MM*). The zombie is berserk (thanks to the influence of the trilloch) and attacks anyone who explores the niche, pursuing prey throughout the complex. The brown mold covering the zombie inflicts 4d8 points of damage to PCs within 5 feet (no saving throw).

Ogre zombie: AC 8; MV 6; HD 6; hp 32; THAC0 15; #AT 1; Dmg 4–16; SA brown mold; SD immune to mind-affecting and cold-based attacks, paralysis, poison, and death magic; turned as 3-HD undead; SZ M; ML special; Int non (0); AL N; XP 650; *MM*/373.

9. T-shaped Corridor. This corridor is unlit, although set into the east wall are two torches in sconces. The torches can be removed, and when lit, their fire is treated as magical for damage purposes. (Thus, they make effective weapons against the xeg-yi in area **10**.)

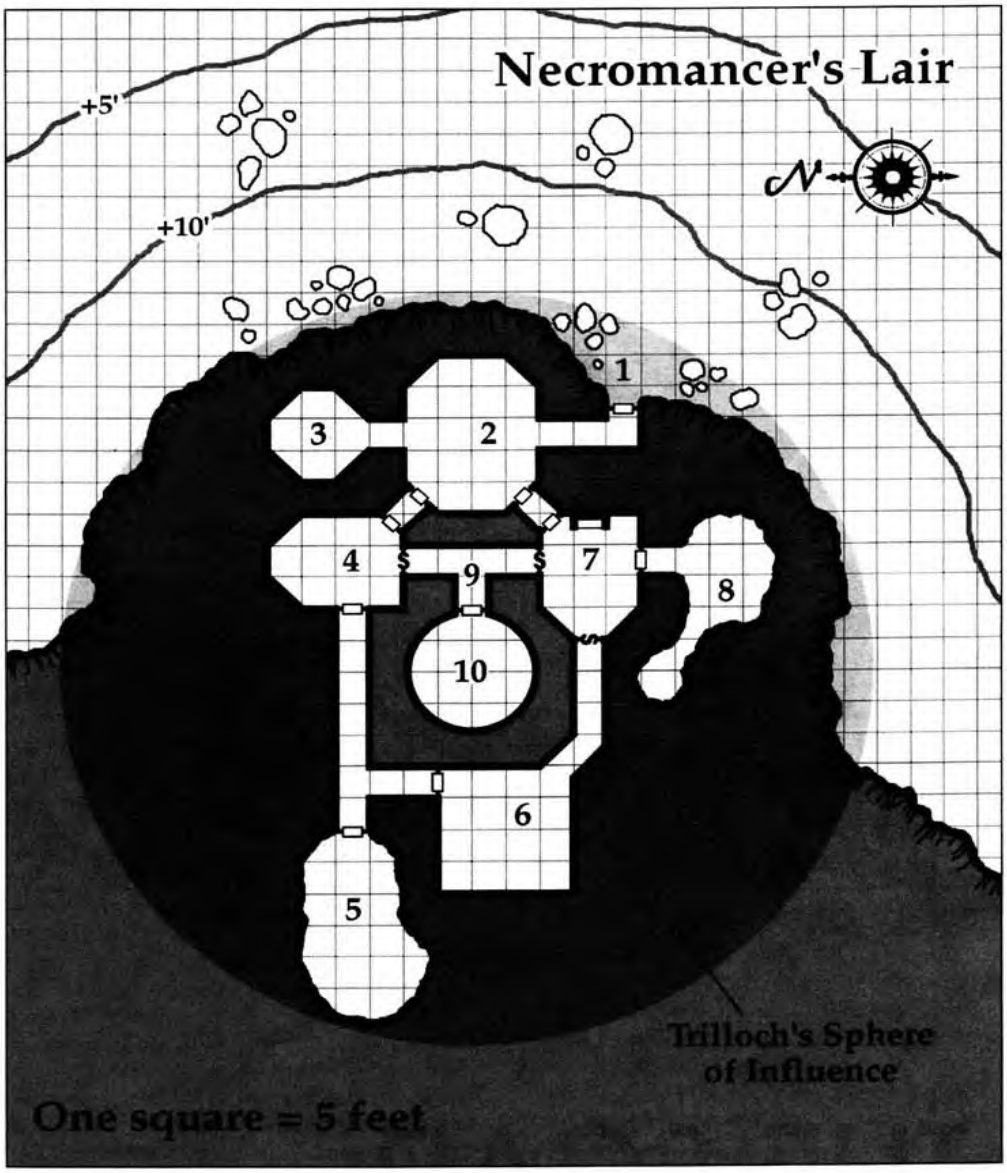
10. Negativity Gate. The door to this room is barred shut from the outside. PCs wishing to enter the room must first lift the iron bar. The circular chamber beyond is colder than the corridor leading to it. Unlike other areas of the complex, the room is unlit. The stonework (walls, ceiling, and floor) is crumbly and brittle—the result of random energy jolts from one of the chamber's denizens.

This room was constructed and enspelled to trap energy from the Negative Material plane. Using a powerful rod that has since crumbled to dust, Sormun opened a small, one-way gate that bleeds energy from the Negative Material plane and confines it here. Drawn here through the gate, the trilloch has been unable to escape. The gate "collects" negative energy; undead creatures and other beings that subsist on negative energy entering the room are effectively trapped inside.

The negative energy that fills this room cannot be seen, but the gate itself appears as a 5'-long, jagged ribbon of darkness in the center of the room. The trilloch, which can be seen only with the aid of the *detect magic* spell, hovers near this dark rift in space.

Shortly after the necromancer's demise, the gate attracted another creature from the Negative Material plane: a xeg-yi. The xeg-yi can sense the trilloch's presence, and the trilloch devours life energy from creatures harmed by the xeg-yi. However, the two creatures cannot communicate with one another or collaborate in any way.

Every other round, the xeg-yi can discharge a black bolt of energy (instead of striking with a tendril), inflicting 1d6+6 points of damage and corroding inanimate materials (including metal, cloth, wood, paper, and stone). Items or surfaces struck by the bolt must make a successful saving throw vs. electricity or become corroded or crumbly.



If the xeg-yi is reduced to 0 or fewer hit points, it explodes in a burst of negative energy that causes 2d6+12 points of damage to all living creatures within 10 feet. (The trilloch, if nearby, is not affected.) Those protected by a *negative plane protection* spell are entitled to a saving throw vs. death magic to reduce the damage by half. Inanimate items caught in the blast must make a successful saving throw vs. electricity or be corroded beyond repair.

Xeg-yi: AC 0; MV fly 6 (B); HD 8; hp 59; THAC0 13; #AT 1; Dmg 1d6+6; SA energy bolt (see above); SD +1 or better weapons needed to hit; immune to all magic save magical fire, *magic missile, disintegration, banishment, dismissal, dispel magic, holy word, limited wish, plane shift*, and *wish*; MR 15%; SZ M (4' diameter); ML 11; Int high (14); AL N; XP 8,000; *Planescape MCAIII*/118.

Trilloch: AC n/a; MV 12; HD n/a; hp n/a; THAC0 n/a; #AT n/a; Dmg n/a; SA induce violence; SD *invisibility*, immune to attacks; SZ M (5' diameter); ML 7; Int animal (1); AL N; XP 650; *Planescape MCAIII*/108.

A *dispel magic* cast on the trilloch or the xeg-yi frees it, allowing the creature to leave Sormun's lair in search of a way back to its home plane. A *banishment* or similar spell cast on either creature returns it to its home plane immediately. A successful *dispel magic* cast on Sormun's gate (treat as 16th-level magic) collapses it, freeing the creatures and enabling them to leave the chamber. Ω

Orc slavers torment a hapless prisoner.

THE SCAR

BY RAY WINNINGER

Where there's a whip, there's a way

Artwork by Chuck Bordell
Cartography by Chris Perkins

Ray designed "The Scar" as a companion piece to his popular "Dungeoncraft" column in DRAGON® Magazine. *An inside look at how the adventure was created can be found in* DRAGON Magazine *Issues #266–270. Past installments of the column appear on* DRAGON Magazine*'s website at* **http://www.wizards.com/dragon/Welcome.asp**.

"The Scar" is an AD&D® adventure designed for 4–6 1st-level characters (about 5 total levels). A party that includes a healthy mixture of character classes and races will have an easier time negotiating the adventure's obstacles. Although "The Scar" is specifically tailored to the campaign setting constructed and developed in the "Dungeoncraft" column, it can be adapted to just about any other game world. Guidelines for converting the adventure to alternate campaign settings are provided.

To properly capture the atmosphere of the ruined temple, you might want to run this adventure in a room with very dim lighting. Furnish yourself and the players with cheap flashlights that can be used when it's necessary to consult a rulebook or get a better look at a character sheet. You'll be surprised how much this simple step contributes to the excitement of the game.

Adventure Background

Aris is a lush, living world of thick forests and dense jungles. More than that, Aris is a powerful sentient force. The plant life that stretches across her surface is infused with her spirit, and her inhabitants worship her as a sort of nature goddess. In fact, many of Aris's worshipers believe that all life on the planet is a part of Aris herself; these folks believe that the various life forms drifting across her continents are like the blood that flows through a living body.

Aris has given rise to a number of great civilizations over the eons, and she is now a very old world—old enough to feel herself weakening. Over the last several centuries, her springs and summers have grown shorter, and most of the oldest trees in her forests have died. As a consequence, a few centuries ago Aris decided to give birth to twin daughters who might one day take her place in the cosmos. Acting upon instructions received in their dreams, a sect of Aris's most devout followers constructed a hidden temple beneath the planet's surface and quested for two enormous gems created by the goddess to serve as her "eggs." Over the next 120 years, Aris's followers carefully tended to these eggs in their hidden temple, waiting for the day when her children would "hatch."

Just before the eggs hatched, however, the hidden temple was raided and the eggs were stolen by a rival religious sect. The rivals, known as the Legion, worshiped the dark and

destructive side of Aris's nature. They hoped to curse the eggs so the goddesses within would be born as cruel and merciless beings who could help the Legion seize control of all life on Aris. Ultimately, the eggs were recovered by Mohab, a noble paladin of the hidden temple, but not before one of the eggs was successfully cursed by the Legionnaires. Since Aris and her priests had no desire to birth a malevolent goddess, only the pure egg was returned to its rightful place in the temple; its corrupted sister was locked away in a deep dungeon to languish.

Curiously, just after the eggs were returned, Mohab awoke one night in the throes of a mysterious madness. Before the night was out, he secretly switched the positions of the two eggs, tricking the priests into birthing the cursed twin. He then left the temple and wasn't seen again for centuries.

Three decades later, the cursed egg finally hatched. Aris's daughter Selene was born in a great cataclysm as a large chunk of Aris herself broke away and hurtled into the sky to orbit the world as its first moon, laying waste to the hidden temple and a huge stretch of the surrounding forest. It wasn't too long before Aris discovered Selene's true nature and revoked the child's birthright, leaving the new moon barren and wasted. But just as Aris gave rise to the various creatures that inhabit her surface, Selene has spent the last several centuries secretly birthing her own twisted inhabitants. The most favored among her children, the mind flayers, have spent the last century or so hatching a scheme designed to break Aris's will and restore Selene as her successor. Planetside, the mind flayers are aided in this quest by the remnants of the Legion, the evil cult responsible for corrupting Selene's birth.

Recently, the Legion/mind flayer conspiracy has gained a powerful new ally: Mohab the ex-paladin has reappeared as a prince of the undead, still in the grip of madness. Exactly how Mohab survived across the centuries and how he fell into his present condition are unknown to everyone but himself. Because it seems clear that Mohab is determined to see Selene depose Aris, the mind flayers and the Legion have cautiously accepted his aid and given him command over some of their forces located on Aris herself. Shortly after accepting this command just a few months ago, Mohab returned to the vicinity of the hidden temple where Selene was "born," the site of his treachery of centuries past. His aim is to reclaim the unused "pure" egg from the temple's vaults, where Aris' priests had placed it before Selene was born. Mohab believes that once the mind flayer/Legion conspiracy reveals itself and the conflict between Selene and Aris intensifies, Aris's followers will ultimately uncover the fate of the second egg and trace it back to the ruins of the hidden temple. The priests will then attempt to obtain the egg and spirit it off to another hidden stronghold where it can be birthed, giving rise to a powerful new ally for Aris. To prevent this from happening, Mohab hopes to find the egg first, curse it, and birth it himself so that Selene's sister can help her overthrow their mother.

The ruins of the hidden temple are located in an area that is now known as "the Scar." A rough, craggy wasteland criss-crossed by fissures and gullies, the Scar is one the few regions on the world of Aris that is not blanketed by trees and vegetation. Although the local inhabitants are dimly aware that the Scar was created by some sort of great cataclysm, only a few written chronicles have survived the centuries to impart the whole story of Selene's birth. Because the location of the hidden temple was always a well-guarded secret, Mohab believes that it is entirely possible that no one else on all of Aris knows that its ruins lie at the bottom of the Scar. In fact, it's likely that most (if not all) of the priests who knew where the temple was located several centuries ago were killed in the cataclysm, making it unlikely that the secret of the temple was ever passed on to another living soul. In part, this is why Mohab believes there is an excellent chance that the second egg still rests in the vault where the priests sealed it just after he retrieved it from the Legion raiders all those years ago.

Because he feels it is too early for the conspiracy to fully reveal itself, Mohab is carrying out his attempt to retrieve the egg through intermediaries. He has recently struck an alliance with a band of orcish mercenaries who were exiled from the Bloodthirsters, a large orc tribe that dominates a sizable chunk of the forest surrounding the Scar. Under the command of their leader, Skarg, these orcs have captured a number of human and demihuman slaves from the surrounding area and put them to work excavating the ruins of the hidden temple in the Scar. Skarg and his band are unaware of Mohab's real loyalties and objectives; the orcs believe that they have joined forces with the undead lord to conquer the whole of the surrounding territories, allowing them to wreak vengeance on the Bloodthirsters who exiled them. Mohab has told them that the object they seek in the temple ruins is a powerful weapon that can guarantee their victory.

Unanswered Questions

As this adventure is intended to kick off a brand new campaign, some of the mysteries it introduces are left unsolved, providing the DM with plenty of opportunities to create additional adventures that further develop the storyline. These "unanswered questions" include the nature of Mohab's undead curse and the whereabouts of the egg he seeks. (The egg isn't present in the temple ruins; Mohab and the PCs discover this fact sometime during the course of the adventure.) Although the "Adventure Background" reveals the true nature of the egg and the story of Selene's birth to the DM, the player characters uncover only hints to these truths in this first outing. More complete revelations should come later in the campaign.

The "Dungeoncraft" column in *DRAGON Magazine* discusses the campaign setting in more detail and provides tips for creating further adventures that help the players unlock these mysteries.

Beginning the Adventure

The adventure begins with the player characters imprisoned in Skarg's slave pits, laboring day by day under the orcs' whips to excavate the ruins of the hidden temple. Their obvious objective is to escape. As the adventure unfolds, they'll also have opportunities to uncover the first traces of the mind flayer/Legion conspiracy and explore some of the secrets of the hidden temple. They might even succeed in driving Skarg's orcs from the area and temporarily foiling Mohab's plans.

Begin the campaign by asking the players to create their characters and purchase their starting equipment as usual. When generating hp totals, allow all the players to assume that they've rolled the maximum result on their beginning Hit Dice. Once everyone is finished, read the following text aloud:

> Your muscles ache from the long hours of manual labor and your back stings from the lash. You've been a prisoner of the orcs for some time now. Just after you were captured they brought you here—the ruins of an ancient underground temple located in a barren wasteland known as the Scar, not far from the human settlement of Ironoak.
>
> The orcs are looking for something. Their leader, a ruthless animal named Skarg, drives them onward and they in turn drive you. You and your fellow prisoners spend fourteen of every twenty-four hours digging and hauling rubble, opening the passageways that will soon allow Skarg to find his prize. Those who defy Skarg fall beneath the slavers' lash—or worse.
>
> It's unlikely that Skarg will be even this hospitable once he has achieved his objective. Your only chance is to escape.

Adapting the Adventure

"The Scar" is relatively easy to adapt to other game worlds. Although its events are somewhat driven by a fairly intricate and world-specific backstory, the adventure itself is rather self-contained. Begin by substituting an item for Aris's egg that is more appropriate to your own world and figuring out why Skarg is trying to obtain the item. If nothing springs to mind, replace the egg with a magical sword or similar item. In this case, Skarg is convinced that such a high-quality weapon is all he'll need to lead his orcs to conquer a nearby human settlement. You can then figure out what will happen if and when Skarg obtains his objective.

If you use the magical sword idea, you can assume that if Skarg gets his hands on it he'll lead an all-out raid on the nearest human settlement, perhaps catapulting the PCs into another, more dangerous adventure. If you decide that Skarg will ultimately discover that his objective is not within the ruined temple after all, you might think about exactly what happened to the item. Although the true fate of the item is probably best resolved in a future adventure, you might use this opportunity to plant some seeds of things to come.

If you're using the adventure with your own game world, you can dispose of Mohab the death knight altogether. He's present only to foreshadow future developments in the Aris campaign. In this case, you should figure out how Skarg came to discover the ruined temple and how he learned that the temple contained his objective. You might assume that Skarg recently captured a sage who was passing through his territory; in exchange for his life, the sage passed on the secret of the temple and the mysterious magical item.

Although it's not strictly necessary, you might think about replacing the campaign-specific secrets in the adventure with some of the big secrets from your own campaign. If you're not sure how to accomplish this, check out the "Dungeoncraft" column in *DRAGON Magazine*.

Location of the Scar

Those following the "Dungeoncraft" column in *DRAGON Magazine* might be interested to know that the Scar is located in the Orc Kingdoms of the Black Wood, about 30 miles from the Ironoak stronghold (a long day's travel on foot). On the map found in *DRAGON Magazine* #265, one can pinpoint its exact location by beginning at Ironoak and then dropping one hex to the south and another to the southwest.

In the GREYHAWK® campaign setting, the Scar can be located anywhere along the Wild Coast near the Pomarj border.

In the FORGOTTEN REALMS® campaign setting, the Scar might be located in the mountains of Luruar, northeast of Silverymoon or perhaps closer to Sundabar.

In the BIRTHRIGHT® campaign setting, the Scar might be located in Roesone, Aerenwe, or the Rjurik Highlands, either in the domain of Halskapa (near the eastern border in the province of Stjolvar) or in the domain of Svinik (in the province of Bergvaas or Innsmark).

At this point, ask each player to invent and relate aloud a brief story describing his or her capture. The idea here is to fill in the necessary backstory and to give all the participants a chance to briefly introduce their characters. If a player can't come up with an idea, you can relate some of these simple suggestions:

Warrior: The PC was protecting a merchant convoy that was ambushed by Skarg and his band of orcs.

Wizard: The PC was out in the woods alone looking for rare herbs as spell components when he or she was waylaid by Skarg's troopers.

Priest: While meditating alone in the woods, the PC was discovered and captured by orc raiders.

Rogue: The PC was trailing a merchant caravan, hoping to purloin some of its wares, when he or she was captured by the orcs.

You might also suggest that some of the players think about linking their stories. In the examples above, for instance, perhaps the rogue was trailing the same caravan the warrior was protecting. In any case, make sure that a part of each story relates how long ago the adventurer was imprisoned. This should be a period ranging from 1 day to 2 months (determined by the DM).

Any character who has been imprisoned for longer than 1 month must make a Constitution check. Anyone who fails the Constitution check sustains 1–2 points of damage before play begins due to fatigue and weakness. This damage heals only after the PC has spent at least one full night of rest outside of the ruined temple and Skarg's clutches (or only after the PC drinks the *blessed* water found in area **8** of the temple).

Each prisoner begins play with only some light clothing. As the adventure begins, all other items and weapons purchased by the PCs are in the hands of the orcs (specifically in area **17**).

The Hidden Temple

The entrance to the hidden temple lies at the bottom of a broad ravine that stretches some 4 miles, across half the width of the Scar. Set into the sidewall of the ravine, the entrance was originally buried beneath tons of rubble and loose gravel. Working under the direction of Mohab, Skarg and his orcs excavated the entrance approximately 3 months before the adventure begins. Now, a well-worn and wide-open stone portal is clearly visible in the rock face. Above the doorway is a partially excavated mantel inscribed with a frieze depicting an army of Aris's followers converging to construct the temple.

A narrow path that twists up and out of the ravine provides access to the hidden doorway. Although the path is precarious in some locations, anyone carefully navigating its twists and turns can ascend 60 feet to the top of the ravine without incident.

Normally, the vast majority of Skarg's orcs are stationed within the temple itself. Anyone coming or going through the main door has a 10% chance of encountering 1–4 orcs who are returning to the temple after performing an errand for Skarg.

Temple Doors: All doors within the temple complex are 8 feet tall and arched at the top. Rather than swinging inward or outward, they rise into slots in the ceiling when opened. Rusty chains that hoist up each door are found to the right side (both front and back) of every door in the complex. Because the chains clank as they are pulled, anyone within 40 feet hears an attempt to open a door. At night, after the prisoners stop working (see "Unfolding the Adventure" below), there is a 20% chance that any orc who hears a door open in the south end of the complex (that is, south of an imaginary line between areas **5** and **9**) comes to investigate.

Friezes: Elaborate friezes illuminated by strange writings wrap across most of the temple complex. The friezes run in a continuous strip across the uppermost 2 feet of the temple walls at the outer regions of the complex and depict religious myths and the construction of the temple itself. The writings are all in the kanlo script, an all-but-forgotten language used by Aris's followers several centuries ago.

Many of the inscriptions on the various friezes contain information that might prove valuable to the PCs as they try to escape from the complex. PCs with the Ancient Languages or Ancient History NWP should attempt a proficiency check the first time they see one of the friezes. If this check succeeds, the PCs can successfully decipher kanlo and interpret all the other friezes throughout the adventure. PCs without these proficiencies can learn to decipher kanlo by acquiring an ancient book found in area **25** or area **37**.

Temple Phantoms: The ruined temple is an eerie place. Throughout the adventure, the PCs occasionally glimpse unexpected movement or feel like they are being watched when no one else is present. In fact, the entire temple complex is haunted by the ghostly apparitions of the priests who died during the cataclysm that marked Selene's birth. With one exception (in area **38**), none of the apparitions has any effect on the adventure. They are present only to provide a creepy atmosphere and to occasionally remind the PCs that the ruined temple was once a thriving complex. PCs cannot harm or speak with the apparitions.

Note that the temple phantoms are nonstandard variants of the phantom described in the *Monstrous Manual*™ tome. Unless otherwise specified, the only effect of glimpsing the phantoms is a momentary cold shiver; the saving throw described in the *Monstrous Manual* is unnecessary.

Illumination: The orcs have placed heavy lanterns throughout the complex to provide illumination. (These locations are marked on the map.) The lanterns have a range of approximately 60 feet and burn all day and night. Outside the range of the lanterns, visibility within the complex is limited to approximately 15 feet.

Skarg's Orcs: If the PCs somehow manage to kill sixteen orcs, all the orcs in the complex lose their morale and flee the temple. Although it's unlikely that the PCs will accomplish this goal before they escape, they might decide to return later to stop Skarg from reaching his goal. Should the orcs flee, Mohab eventually returns to the temple complex with a new set of lackeys.

Many of the orcs wear heavy black cloaks for protection against the underground cold. Any PC who gets his or her hands on such a cloak might pass for an orc at a distance. An orc who sees a character wearing such a disguise is allowed a saving throw vs. spell to recognize that the character is not an orc. This roll receives a bonus based upon the range to the disguised character:

Range	Saving Throw Bonus
< 20 feet	Automatic detection
20–30 feet	+4
31–40 feet	+3
41–50 feet	+2
51–60 feet	+1

Unless otherwise noted, all orcs inside the hidden temple have the following statistics:

Orcs: AC 8 (leather armor); MV 9; HD 1; hp 5 each; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg 1–6 (spear) or 1–4 (scourge); SZ M; ML 11; Int average (8); AL LE; XP 15; *MM*/281; leather armor, heavy black cloak, spear, scourge, 3d6 gp in leather pouch.

Temple Encounter Key

1. Entryway. Access to the temple is provided by this 30'-long sloping passage that leads from the excavated portal at the bottom of the ravine down into the temple proper. Like the rest of the complex, the walls of the entryway are hewn from limestone. Any decorations that might have adorned them have long since worn away.

2. Vestibule. The main entryway leads down into this 30' × 30' chamber. A passageway on the north wall provides access to the rest of the temple complex. Both the east and west walls are decorated with faded murals depicting sylvan landscapes.

In the south corner of each mural is a 5'-square secret panel that pivots on its central axis. Anyone who examines the mural might notice the panel seam; treat it as a secret door. Together with the secret doors in the guard posts (area **4**), these panels were designed to allow the temple to be quickly and secretly evacuated during an invasion.

3. Parlor. This room was once used as a reception area for temple visitors. It now serves as makeshift sleeping quarters for a band of Skarg's orcs. Piles of skins and discarded bits of food occupy much of the room. During the day, while the prisoners are laboring, two orcs are typically found here, arguing or gambling. At night, four orcs bed down here, two of whom usually sleep buried beneath their skin piles, effectively hiding them from interlopers.

Each orc keeps some personal treasure (looted from elsewhere within the temple) beneath his skin pile. Searching all the skins reveals a total of 24 gp, a 10-gp gem, and a scroll containing a *charm person* spell. The owner of this last item has no idea what it is but recognizes it as something valuable. A discarded suit of leather armor and a few spears can also be found here (three spears during the day, and five at night).

4. Guard Posts. The guard posts were once manned by temple guards protecting the main entryway and the halls surrounding the vestibule. Each contains the remains of a wooden cot, a stool, and an empty rack for displaying polearms. There is a rusty knife blade (Dmg 1d3/1d2) that is separated from the handle under the shattered cot in the eastern guard post. Secret doors connect the guard posts with storage chambers (area **6**).

The orcs rarely visit these rooms.

5. Guest Rooms. These three rooms located just outside the entry area were built to serve as guest rooms for visitors to the temple. Each houses the remains of a bed, nightstand, and desk, all of which were smashed to pieces by orcs looking for treasure shortly after Skarg's forces entered the complex.

The northwest room is completely overgrown with thick spider webs that are home to three large spiders. The spiders occasionally exit through a small hole in the room's south wall and roam elsewhere within the complex to collect water droplets. For the most part, though, they stay confined to their webs and feed on the rats and mice that become entangled.

Anyone entering the spiders' room must take care not to become entangled. Any PC who is fighting within the room and rolls a natural "1" on his or her attack roll slips and falls into the webs. Breaking free from the webs requires a number of rounds equal to 19 minus the victim's Strength score; for instance, a PC with a 15 Strength can break free in 4 rounds. In the meantime, the spiders can attack the webbed PC with a +4 bonus to hit. Setting fire to the webs burns them all away in 1d6 rounds and inflicts 1–6 points of damage to any spiders still in the room. The spiders viciously attack anyone who employs this tactic but leave their webs as necessary.

Beneath the webs are a 50-gp gem, 65 sp, 7 gp, a full bottle of fine wine (worth 10 gp), a *dagger +1*, and the desiccated corpse of an orc who entered the room, noticed the glint of the gem, and fell into the webs. The dead orc is armed with a spear and wears leather armor. Note that the wine bottle will definitely attract the interest of any orc who sees it. Any orc who finds himself in possession of the bottle gulps down its contents as soon as possible.

Large spiders (3): AC 8; MV 6, web 15; HD 1+1; hp 7, 5, 4; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg 1; SA poison (Type A; +2 bonus to saving throw); SZ S; ML 7; Int non (0); AL N; XP 175; *MM*/326.

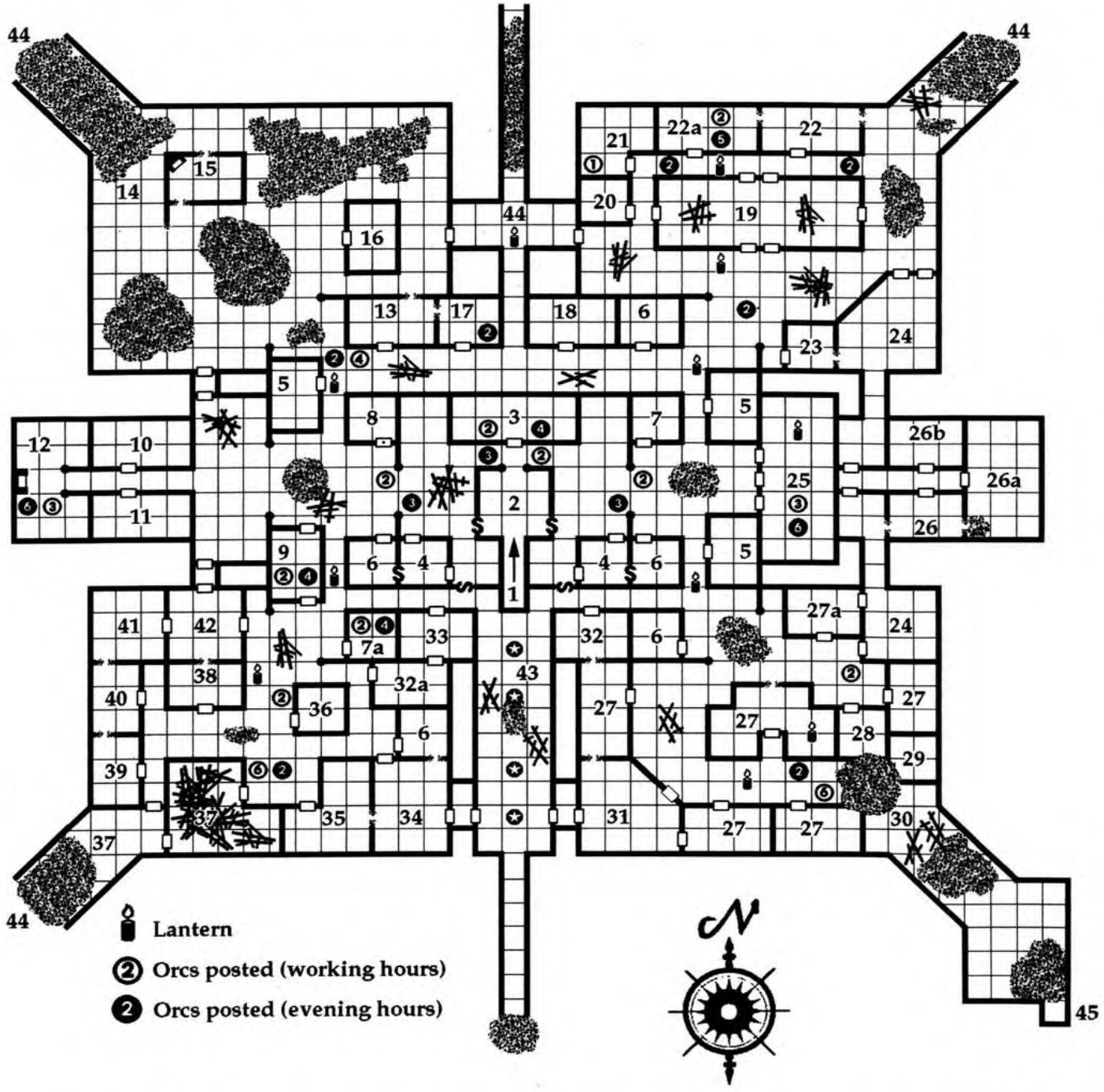
6. Storage Chambers. A few small storage chambers stand on the periphery of the main entry area. The temple builders used these rooms to store various goods and consumables. Today they are mostly empty, looted long ago by Skarg's orcs. One turn spent search the trash has a 20% chance of turning up 1d6 sp and a cloak similar to those worn by Skarg's orcs.

7. Shrines. These shrines are small worship nooks dedicated to Aris. They were used by visitors and the temple priests for quick prayers and contemplation. Each houses a wooden stool that sits before a rotted wooden credenza. The credenzas once held golden idols and other religious icons, but these items were removed from the temple long before the orcs arrived.

The shrine labeled area **7a** on the map currently serves as a barracks for some of Skarg's orcs. Like area **3**, this shrine is piled full of skins and trash. Two orcs can be found here

The Hidden Temple

One square = 10 feet



Mapping the Complex: To make the adventure a bit more playable, it's recommended that the DM draw out an accurate map of the complex for the players. Begin the map by drawing only areas **25** and **26** and the corridors that lead to the work area (area **30**). Then, every time a PC enters a new area, extend the map as appropriate. Mapping the complex in this fashion should speed play considerably and allow the PCs to concentrate on making their escape plans.

during the day and four in the evening. The orcs' treasure consists of a sack of 300 cp, 55 sp, 21 gp, and a small jade idol worth 15 gp.

8. Cisternary. Before the door to this room can be opened, a key must be used to open a large locking mechanism located on the door itself. The key can be found in area **23**. The orcs have never entered the room.

The cisternary was used to store the holy waters used by the temple priests in their ceremonies. At the center of the room are four huge copper bowls filled with water. Along the west wall is a shelf that contains two empty glass bottles. In sharp contrast to the rest of the complex, the cisternary is still in excellent condition. The walls are smooth and sanded; the bowls in the center of the room are well polished and the water is pure.

Any cleric of neutral or good alignment who enters the cisternary receives a brief feeling of inner peace and joy. Such characters immediately recognize that there is obviously something special about the room. The water contained in the copper bowls has all the properties of traditional holy water but also acts as a potion of *healing* upon anyone who drinks it. The small glass bottles (or any other convenient vessel) can be used to carry some of the water out of the room. Each bottle holds water equivalent to two full doses of *healing* potion. Note that the water from the cisternary immediately loses its special properties once it is removed from the temple.

9. Tapestry Chamber. The inner walls of this chamber are blanketed by thick, moth-eaten tapestries that give the whole room an overpowering musty smell. Although once fine art, the tapestries are now worthless. Today, the tapestry chamber serves as yet another barracks for Skarg's orcs. Two orcs can usually be found here during the day and four at night. The orcs keep a collective treasure beneath their sleep skins consisting of 125 sp, 36 gp, a rusted broadsword, and a shield.

10. Food Storage. This chamber, once a parlor for the temple priests, is now used as a food storage area by Skarg's orcs. The stripped carcasses of several deer hang suspended from the ceiling, lending the room a slightly sickening stench. Also within the room is a makeshift shelf that holds several loaves of bread (a few of them slightly moldy) and a number of cheese wheels recently plundered from an ambushed merchant caravan. One corner of the food storage room contains a pile of equipment: two iron spikes, a footman's pick, and an unburned torch.

Frieze: The friezes in this room depict the construction of area **32**. A caption (in kanlo) reads: *"Quarters for the paladins are constructed in the south wing."*

11. Wine Cellar. To the delight of Skarg and his orcs, the old inhabitants of the temple maintained a large wine cellar. Shortly after they arrived, the orcs discovered the wine and dip into the supply every night as part of their evening revelry. The room houses twelve large casks in total, two of which are now empty. Although Skarg fiercely punishes any orc found to have tapped into this wine without permission, several of his troops sneak in and out of here for quick drinks throughout the day.

Frieze: This frieze depicts the construction of area **37**. The caption reads: *"The great library is constructed in the southwest wing."*

12. Hearth. This chamber is dominated by a large, open fireplace in the west wall. The rest of the room is filled with rickety but still functional wooden furniture (a long table and five chairs), a large stack of roughly cut lumber, and the ubiquitous piles of sleeping skins carried in by Skarg's orcs. Back when the temple was still operational, its inhabitants used this area as a sitting room on especially cold evenings. Now, the room functions as a barracks for some of Skarg's most important lieutenants. Three orcs are found here during most days; six orcs bed here at night. Each orc keeps a separate treasure under his sleeping skin (amounting to 120 gp total), a shield, a shortbow, and ten arrows.

Four large iron cages that were brought by Skarg's orcs line the south wall. These cages serve as kennels for a pack of six wild dogs the orcs use as watchdogs and bloodhounds. Normally, only half the dogs are present; the others are out with their masters on patrol. Note that the dogs automatically smell any PC within 20 feet, hear any moving PC within 40 feet, and can track quarry as 3rd-level rangers. If the dogs detect any non-orc in their vicinity, they bark ferociously. One particularly clever orc has placed his treasure, a sack of 8 pp, within the dog cages to keep it safe.

The fireplace's chimney might be particularly interesting to adventurers hoping to escape from the temple. In fact, the chimney is large enough to accommodate a human being and does extend upward and out of the complex entirely, emerging through a small hole not far from the temple entrance in the ravine. Unfortunately, the chimney is effectively blocked by a nest built by a small colony of four stirges. The nest is located about halfway up the chimney's 20' length and is only barely visible from ground level inside the hearth. Although one or two stirges occasionally fly down into the temple complex looking for blood, the stirges confine most of their hunting to the surrounding ravine. The creatures vigorously attack anyone who disturbs their nest (including escaping adventurers), but setting fire to the nest will drive all the stirges away in 2 rounds. When fighting within the confines of the chimney, the stirges lose their special ability to fight as 4-HD monsters.

Once the stirges are gone, climbing out of the chimney is relatively easy. PCs with access to rope automatically make the climb without incident. All others must pass a Strength check to complete the climb. PCs who fail this check slip down the chimney a few feet and sustain 1–2 points of damage before they can try again.

Wild dogs (6): AC 7; MV 15; HD 1+1; hp 5 each; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg 1–4; SZ S; ML 7; Int semi (3); AL N; XP 35; *MM*/57.

Stirges (4): AC 8; MV 3, fly 18 (C); HD 1+1; hp 4 each; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg 1–3; SA blood drain; SZ S; ML 8; Int animal (1); AL N; XP 175; *MM*/332.

Frieze: The section of the frieze stretching throughout the room depicts the groundbreaking ceremony that began construction of the temple. The caption reads: *"Arch-priest Josephus Cristophus, his beloved daughter Anya, and the dwarven engineers look upon the site chosen for Aris's temple."*

13. Orc Strongpoint. The northwest quarter of the complex is inhabited by a mysterious howling beast (described in areas **14** and **15**). To keep the beast at bay, the orcs maintain a large fire and a number of warriors in the hallway outside this room. The fire seems to repel the monster. If it is ever extinguished, the creature escapes into the center of the complex in 1–3 turns, compelling two-thirds of the orcs in the temple to rush off to fight it for 2–4 turns. Half of all the orcs who fight the monster are slain in the battle, severely depleting Skarg's forces. The area itself is almost completely bare, housing only a pair of sleeping skins (sometimes used by off-duty guards from the hallway strongpoint) and two spare spears.

14. The Gnasher's Hunting Grounds. This area of the complex is inhabited by a wild howling monster the orcs call "the Gnasher." None of the orcs has ever seen the Gnasher; they've only heard its wailing. Troublesome prisoners are sometimes thrust into the Gnasher's maze at spearpoint while the rest of the prisoners are forced to stand in the hallway and listen to the terrible screams.

In reality, the Gnasher is an immature owlbear that found its way into this area of the temple through the blocked off passageway in the northwest corner of the maze and became trapped. The creature survives by eating the giant rats that often pass through the maze and the occasional victims offered by the orcs. Anyone who enters the maze will first start to hear the owlbear's loud panting a round or two after entry. Each round thereafter, there is a 1-in-8 chance the owlbear locates the intruder and attacks.

Fortunately for its victims, the owlbear is easily confused. Fire repels the beast, and shiny objects distract it for a round or two.

The Gnasher (immature owlbear): AC 5; MV 12; HD 4; hp 19; THAC0 17; #AT 3; Dmg 1–4/1–4/2–8; SA hug for 2–12 points of damage per round; SZ M (7' tall); ML 12; Int low (5); AL N; XP 270; *MM*/284 (modified).

15. The Gnasher's Lair. The owlbear uses this room at the heart of the maze as its lair. The whole area is plagued by the sickening smell issuing forth from the remains of various half-eaten victims the creature has dragged back here. Among the remains and refuse are 22 gp, 44 sp, and 142 cp.

A large fireplace sits in the northwest corner of the room, and its man-sized chimney leads directly out of the complex through a hole in the ravine wall. The cataclysm that ruined the temple knocked enough stones loose inside the chimney to provide convenient footholds for climbers, allowing any PC who attempts such an effort to automatically ascend the chimney without incident.

Frieze: The frieze that decorates this chamber depicts a council of Aris's high priests. The caption reads: *"The high priests come together and set the stage for the new order."*

16. Temple Treasury. This room once served as the temple's main treasury. The presence of "the Gnasher" has prevented the orcs from getting their hands on the prizes it houses. The treasury now contains four 50-gp gems, a necklace worth 50 gp, six sacks containing 20 gp each, 600 cp, 150 sp, a *shield +1*, a suit of studded leather armor, and a longsword.

Frieze: The treasury's frieze depicts the world of Aris orbited by two moons. The caption reads: *"One day they will be born."*

17. Armory. Although this room once served as a meditation chamber for visitors, Skarg's orcs now use it to store their weapons and equipment. Two orcs can usually be found relaxing in this room in the evenings after the work shift ends.

The equipment stored in the armory consists of eleven spears, four suits of orc-sized leather armor, four cloaks identical to those worn by the orcs, a shield, a broadsword, and a sling with eleven bullets. In addition, all of the items and equipment purchased by the PCs prior to play can be found here.

18. Water Storage. The temple inhabitants used this chamber to collect and store water. Skarg's orcs use it for the same purpose today. Four large tuns half-filled with water dominate the center of the room. Overhead can be seen a number of small holes in the crumbling ceiling. Anyone who looks up into these holes finds a large vent that stretches up from the ceiling and out of the temple. (Sunlight streams through the ceiling holes during daylight hours.) The ceiling was built in such a way to allow rainfall to trickle down into the storage tuns, adding to the fresh water supplies of the inhabitants.

The crumbling ceiling is a potential escape route. About 2 hours of work with a pick or similar metal tool (4 hours of work using a heavy rock as a tool) chips a hole in the ceiling large enough to crawl through; only one character can stand atop the tuns and work on the ceiling at a time. Once through the ceiling, a 20-foot climb leads to freedom. The vent emerges at a ground hole camouflaged by scrub not far from the main temple entrance. Fortunately, the climb is relatively easy. PCs with access to rope automatically make the climb without incident. All others must make a successful Strength check to complete the climb. PCs who fail this check slip down the chimney a few feet and sustain 1–2 points of damage before they can try again.

Of course, the work necessary to collapse the ceiling is bound to be noisy. Although the evening revelry keeps the orcs distracted (see "Unfolding the Adventure"), once the revelry is completed the orcs in areas **3** and **17** are sure to hear any heavy work in this room, forcing them to investigate.

19. Temple. This large room once served as the complex's main temple. Most of the room is occupied by smashed wooden benches, shattered statues, and fallen support beams. Along the eastern wall, though, the old altar and the dais upon which it sits remain relatively intact. Resting atop the altar is an iron bowl and a dried tree branch. Clerics and druids of Aris instantly recognize these items as important symbols of their faith. Any such character who steps up on the dais receives a brief, mysterious vision and drops to his or her knees. The vision consists of a crystal-clear image of a long iron key with a thick hoop for a handle. Any characters receiving the vision will be unable to identify its source and can only suppose that it must have been sent by the goddess herself.

Frieze: The frieze that covers the temple's walls depicts a number of noteworthy high priests, all of whom are long dead. The caption reads: *"To house their divine burden, the high priests agree to build a formidable underground temple."*

20. Scripture Room. The high priests who built the temple used this room to store holy books, scrolls, and scriptures. Most of the works stored here were carted off long ago. The musty room is now filled with a messy pile of blank papers and writing implements. Beneath the pile are two items of interest: a small book that was undiscovered by Skarg's minions and a scrap of paper containing some obviously magical writings. The paper scrap is the equivalent of a magic scroll housing a *silence 15' radius* spell. The book was written in an ancient form of the Common tongue and contains a brief history of the temple. Anyone who spends 5 hours reading the book gleans a few interesting facts:

- The temple was built under instructions from Aris herself to allow its occupants to carry out some sort of important mission.
- The priests who built the temple knew that Aris was growing old and weak.
- Once the mission is complete, the result will be a great cataclysm that will lay waste to the area surrounding the temple.

No other useful information can be drawn from the text.

Frieze: The frieze describes the construction of the cisternary and depicts a long key with a looping handle. The caption reads: *"The cisternary lies toward the center of the complex."*

21. Worship Room. This was once a private worship room for the temple's high priest. It now serves as sleeping quarters for Skarg, who has assembled bits of furniture found elsewhere in the complex to make himself comfortable. The room currently houses an ornately carved (but partially rotted) bed, a wobbly wooden desk, a chest of drawers, a cracked mirror, and a large mat.

Skarg keeps his treasure in the chest of drawers beneath a spare cloak; the treasure consists of 40 pp, 180 gp, four 20-gp gems, a silver hand mirror worth 8 gp, a dagger, and a book. The book contains a set of alchemy notes written in an ancient form of the Common tongue. Anyone who spends 2 hours reading the book can attempt an Intelligence check. Success indicates that the character picks up the following facts:

- Mixing one measure of the "black powder" with one measure of the "green powder" produces a mixture that fizzles for three seconds before producing a smoky explosion.
- Mixing one measure of the "green powder" with one measure of the "yellow powder" and dissolving the result in water yields a potion that heals the sick and cures poison.
- Mixing two measures of the "yellow powder" with one measure of the "blue powder" and dissolving the result in water produces a highly caustic acid.

See area **34** for details on the powders.

Sitting atop the desk is a small sack containing 30 pp and a note reading: *"This is a downpayment. More when your troopers find the egg. —M."*

Skarg spends his evenings here and most of his days roaming around the complex overseeing various operations. Whenever Skarg is away, he makes sure another orc stays in his quarters to keep an eye on things.

Skarg (orc chief): AC 7 (studded leather armor); MV 9; HD 3; hp 14; THAC0 17; #AT 1; Dmg 1–8 (longsword); SZ M; ML 15; Int average (10); AL LE; XP 65; *MM*/281; studded leather armor, longsword.

Frieze: Here the frieze depicts a violent earthquake and a torrent of flame shooting skyward. The caption reads: *"Upon completion of the divine mission, there will be a cataclysm that will lay waste to the area surrounding the temple. Martyrs will give their lives in Aris's service."*

22. Cloisters. Although these rooms once served as quiet meditation areas for the temple priests, one now serves as a barracks for some of Skarg's troopers (marked area **22a** on the map). Usually, two orcs can be found here during daylight and five at night. Two of the orcs who bed here in the evenings, Kurz and Stromm, are bitter enemies. Kurz believes that his son died as a result of Stromm's cowardice in battle. Should the PCs come by this room at night when both orcs are present, there is a 1-in-3 chance the orcs are arguing and a 1-in-10 chance the two are fighting.

Both of the cloisters house rickety tables and decaying floor mats. In area **22a**, piles of sleeping skins cover the floor and a rusty polearm rack containing a pair of halberds sits in the northwest corner. The orcs keep a treasure under the sleeping skins consisting of 30 gp, 140 sp, and a bottle of perfume worth 14 gp.

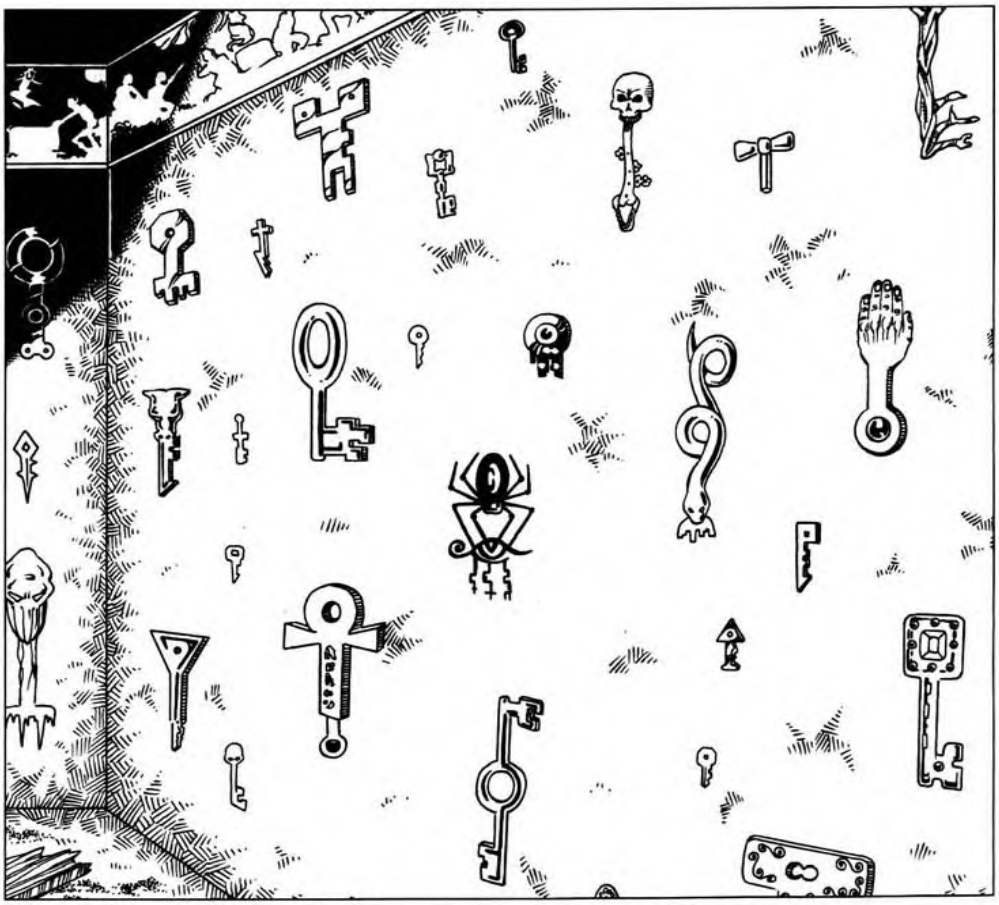
Frieze: Both cloisters feature identical friezes depicting two jeweled eggs. The caption reads: *"Two sisters shall be born."*

23. Key Room. The key was a holy symbol to the sect of Aris's followers who built the temple. To the priests, the key represented life, knowledge, and power. This chamber houses hundreds of keys of all descriptions collected over the years by the priests of the temple. Some of the keys were obtained on dangerous quests, others were given to the priests as gifts by foreign rulers, and still others were simply purchased. Among the keys located here is the iron key with the hoop handle possibly seen in a cleric's vision. (See area **19**.) This key unlocks the cisternary (area **8**). The adventurers might also recognize this key from the frieze in area **20**. Without either of these clues, it will be almost impossible to discern the correct key from all the others.

Note that this room might be a great place to leave a key that opens another important and ancient lock elsewhere in your campaign.

Frieze: The frieze depicts two moons orbiting the planet of Aris. The caption reads: *"The sisters."*

24. Page Rooms. When the temple was active, these rooms served as quarters for some of the pages and servants who attended the priests and their guests. Today, they are unused and filled with smashed sticks of furniture and trash. Searching either room has a 1-in-6 chance of yielding 1d20 cp. A slightly frayed but still usable 30' length of rope can be found in the southern room.



The priesthood of Aris collected many strange keys over the years.

Frieze: Both of these rooms feature identical friezes depicting the construction of the Hall of Honor (area **43**). The caption reads: *"A great hall of honor was constructed in the south wing of the complex. A great weapon was placed in Cameron's hands."*

25. Servants' Study. In this room, the temple servants once studied mathematics and literature under the tutelage of the priests. Now, several of Skarg's troopers use it as a barracks. Three orcs are usually found here during the daylight hours and six after dark. These orcs are responsible for keeping an eye on the prisoners quartered in area **26a**.

Storr, the leader of the orcs who bed in this chamber, loves games of chance and frequently joins his troops in loud rounds of "bones" (similar to craps) and other gambling games. It's possible that enterprising prisoners might find a way to use this tendency against him. Storr agrees to just about any bet or game a PC might propose. He is willing to wager extra rations of food and water, a cloak, or the ability for the prisoner of the winner's choice to forego a prescribed punishment. (See "The Daily Routine.") Unless the prisoners have a better idea, Storr proposes that they accept the following condition if they lose the bet. Storr and his troopers allow the PC prisoners to freely roam the complex for 1 hour. At the end of that time, the prisoners must return with a "treasure" for Storr and his orcs (something of at least 10-gp value). If the prisoners do not return, the orcs will sound a general alarm, hunt the escapees down, and kill them on sight. If the prisoners return with a less than adequate treasure, Storr throws their leader (his choice) in the hole for a day. (See "Unfolding the Adventure.") Of course, none of the other orcs in the complex will be aware of the bet, and any who see the prisoners while they are on their mission presume that they are escaping and take appropriate action.

Storr's orcs have filled their room with the usual sleeping skins and a few sticks of old furniture liberated from other areas of the complex. Three orc cloaks lie atop a 30' length of rope coiled in the northeast corner of the room. Each of the orcs who beds in this room carries his treasure on his person at all times

(consisting of 3d6 gp). Storr has a special treasure—a book he found elsewhere in the complex—that he keeps under his sleeping skin. The book is a scholarly work on languages written in the Common tongue. Any PC who studies it for 4 hours and makes a successful Intelligence check gains the ability to decipher all the kanlo runes in the complex, including the friezes.

Storr (orc subchief): AC 8 (leather armor); MV 9; HD 2; hp 8; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg 1–6 (footman's mace) or 1–4 (scourge); SZ M; ML 13; Int average (10); AL LE; XP 35; *MM*/281; leather armor, footman's mace, scourge.

Frieze : The frieze in this room depicts dry leaves dropping from the tall trees of a dense forest. The caption reads: *"Year by year Aris ages, but she never fades from our hearts."*

26. Servants' Quarters. These rooms once quartered servants who tended to the temple priests. Two of them are now empty and the third, labeled area **26a** on the map, is used to quarter the PCs and the orcs' other prisoners between work periods. In addition to the PCs, eighteen other prisoners are housed here. Most are merchants and youngsters taken from nearby human settlements. The prisoners hate the orcs and won't interfere with any of the PCs' plans to escape. If asked to join an escape attempt, none of the other prisoners agrees for fear of orc reprisals unless the PCs have obtained some obvious advantage (a magical item, for instance, or armor and weapons that inflict more than 1–6 points of damage).

The prisoners' chamber is empty except for two large piles of straw that serve as rudimentary bedding. The orcs have removed the chain that opens the door from the inside of the room. (Opening the door from the inside requires a successful Bend Bars/Lift Gates roll.) A huge pile of rubble occupies the southwest corner of the room. If the PCs dig through this pile of rubble (requiring approximately 40 man-hours without tools), they discover a wall breach on the other side. Once discovered, this breach can be concealed from the orcs as if hiding an item (as explained in the "Unfolding the Adventure" section).

Prisoners, 0-level humans (18): AC 10; MV 12; 0-level; hp 2 each; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; roll 2d4+6 for ability scores; ML 6; AL any good; unarmed.

Frieze: These chambers feature identical friezes depicting the construction of the hearth and its chimney (area **12**). The caption reads *"The great hearth was built in the western wing of the complex."*

27. High Priest's Quarters. Long ago, when the temple was active, these rooms served as quarters for the temple priests. Objects formerly housed in the rooms were looted by the orcs long ago.

Area **27a** was the personal chamber of the temple master, a high priest of Aris. The only remaining hint of its former station is an elaborately patterned tile mosaic countersunk into the western wing of the room's floor. Since the orcs who oversee the digging at area **30** use this room as an informal command post, a small kettle was moved into the room's northwest corner and filled with water for refreshment. Beyond a few broken splinters of furniture, the only other object remaining in the room is a small box resting in the southwest corner.

The box is approximately 12 inches long, 6 inches wide, and 4 inches deep. It's made of a strange red metal and is surprisingly well preserved. Although shaking the box reveals that there is something within, no seam or method of opening the box is visible. A quick examination reveals that top of the box is monogrammed JC and the underside of the box contains four dials, each of which contains six kanlo runes that roughly correspond to letters in the common alphabet:

Dial 1	Dial 2	Dial 3	Dial 4
A	G	O	S
E	N	I	L
K	U	D	A
T	E	Y	H
F	R	P	W

This puzzle box was presented to Josephus Cristophus, the temple's high priest, as a gift by an important foreign dignitary. If the dials are spun so that their uppermost letters spell "ANYA," the box pops open. Short of dialing the correct code, there is almost no way to get inside the box; no ordinary amount of force opens it. Anya was the name of Cristophus's daughter, a fact the PCs might glean from the frieze in area **12**. The box was found by the orcs shortly after they entered the temple, but cast off in frustration after they found they couldn't open it. Inside the box is a pouch containing three pinches of *dust of disappearance* and a *wand of paralyzation* (6 charges).

Frieze: Identical friezes in all these rooms depict a number of tall trees in a dense forest. There is no caption.

28. Wardrobe. This room contains a number of empty iron racks along its eastern wall. When the temple was active, these racks were used to store the robes and vestments worn by the priests who inhabited this wing of the complex. Today, only a single cast-off cloak remains, lying in a heap in the room's northeast corner. While this cloak isn't identical to the cloaks worn by the orcs, it's close enough to perhaps serve as a useful disguise. Any orc attempting to penetrate the disguise of a PC wearing this robe receives a +1 bonus to his saving throw vs. spell.

Frieze: Here, the frieze depicts the construction of the armory. The caption reads: *"An armory was established near the northwest wing of the complex."*

29. Priests' Shrine. The priests who made their quarters in this wing used this room as a shrine and meditation chamber. Since its doorway is buried behind fallen rubble, the orcs have not yet made their way inside.

A finely woven and well-preserved rug (worth 50 gp) carpets a 10' × 10' stretch of the floor, and a hardwood cabinet rests against the north wall. Inside the cabinet rests a golden idol of a tall, stylized redwood tree worth 150 gp. If and when the work party breaks into this room, Skarg claims the idol and moves it to his quarters. He'll leave the rug to the orcs who reside in area **12**.

Frieze: The frieze in this room depicts the construction of an intricate laboratory. The caption reads: *"Abram, learned friend of the temple, built his laboratory in the southwest wing."*

30. Work Area and Vestibule. Back when the temple was active, this chamber was used as a parlor by the temple priests and their pages. Much of the labor that Skarg's prisoners perform throughout the course of the adventure takes place just outside and within this room. Two days after the adventure begins, the work party finally breaks through into the northwest wing of the vestibule. (See "Unfolding the Adventure.") Once inside, they discover some of the room's original furnishings relatively intact, including a wooden writing desk (heavy, but worth 80 gp), a decorative woven carpet (worth 40 gp), and an unbroken crystal vase (worth 20 gp). Once recovered, these items will be split up between Skarg, the orcs who bed in area **3**, and the orcs who sleep in area **7a**.

Three days after the work party breaks through into the vestibule, the workers clear a path through the next pile of rubble, giving them access to the middle portion of the chamber. None of the items or furniture that occupied this second area escaped the cataclysm unscathed. The entire middle portion of the chamber is covered with the remains of broken furniture, gravel, and bits of rubble.

Once the work party has entered the second segment of the vestibule, it takes another 6 days to clear a path through the final pile of rubble and debris that blocks off access to the vault (area **45**).

Each time the workers break through to a new portion of the chamber, Skarg and Mohab insist upon being present as the final stones are removed. Both greet what awaits on the opposite side of the first two breaches with angry curses as they discover the additional rubble lying between them and their goal. It will be clear to any prisoners who witness

these outbursts that Skarg and Mohab know exactly what they are looking for and where it is located. It is also be clear that Skarg is eager to use the mysterious object of the search to launch an attack on the surrounding lands.

Frieze: The frieze depicts the construction of a smaller parlor, its fireplace, and a chimney. The caption reads: *"A second hearth exists in the northwest wing of the complex."*

31. Laundry. The priests who built the temple used this room as a central laundry. Two huge, empty, rusted iron vats occupy the center of the chamber, and a number of rusted iron racks stand against the south wall. An old pile of frayed but usable linens rests on the bottom shelf of the easternmost rack. Enterprising adventurers can tear the linens into strips and tie the strips together to form a stout rope.

Frieze: This frieze depicts the construction of a large table and a surrounding council room. The caption reads: *"The Answer Stone is set in the council chamber in the southwest wing of the complex."*

32. Paladins' Quarters. These chambers once served as quarters for four paladins who lived in the temple and oversaw its defense. Most of the items that were still intact after the cataclysm were removed by the orcs long ago. Today, only a few splintered sticks of furniture and scraps of carpet remain.

Anyone entering area **32a** immediately experiences a strange sensation of cold and evil. Long ago, Mohab made his quarters in these chambers. At a few points during the adventure (see "Unfolding the Adventure"), he returns to this room and sits silently in the dark by himself. Should PCs enter his chamber while Mohab is "meditating" in this fashion, he warns them to leave at once. If they do not heed his warning, he casts a *symbol of fear*. Curiously, even if the PCs don't have the orcs' permission to be moving around the complex when Mohab shoos them away, he will not bring the incident to the orcs' attention.

Frieze: The frieze depicts a starscape in the night sky. There is no caption.

33. Squires' Quarters. The squires tending to the temple paladins made their quarters in this chamber. Today, all that remains here are the splintered ruins of a number of bunks and a rickety writing desk.

Frieze: This frieze depicts a group of workers moving delicate steel cages into the temple aviary. The caption reads: *"An aviary is constructed in the complex's southwest quarter."*

34. Wizard's Lab. Abram, a wizard and ally of the priests who constructed the temple complex, used this chamber as a magical laboratory. Although Abram died generations before Selene hatched, his rooms were left intact and used over the decades by the occasional visiting wizard. Since the orcs are afraid of sorcery, they have generally avoided the room since their arrival.

Although the cataclysm destroyed much of Abram's apparatus, a few items remain intact. The floor is covered with smashed bits of glassware. Six pristine pieces of delicate glassware (each worth 5 gp) sit atop an old workbench. Along one wall are shelves that house various curiosities including a human skull, a candle, a silver dagger (worth 10 gp), and a rack of test tubes. The test tubes contain three measures each of five colored powders: black, green, yellow, blue, and orange. If the PCs recover the book found in area **21**, they might realize that they can mix the powders to produce various magical effects, as follows:

- Mixing one measure of the black powder with one measure of the green powder creates a mixture that fizzles for exactly three seconds and then explodes, causing 2–12 points of damage to everyone within a 10' radius; a successful saving throw vs. breath weapon halves the damage. After the explosion, a smoke cloud with a 10' radius hovers over the vicinity for 1–6 rounds.
- Mixing one measure of the green powder with one measure of the yellow powder and dissolving the result in water produces a single dose of a potion that heals 1–8 points of damage and *neutralizes poison* when imbibed.
- Mixing two measures of the yellow powder with one measure of the blue powder and dissolving the result in water produces a highly corrosive acid. If thrown at a target, the acid inflicts 2–12 points of damage; a successful saving throw vs. breath weapon halves the damage.

Frieze: The frieze here depicts two moons orbiting the planet of Aris. The caption reads *"The sisters."*

35. Wizard's Quarters. Abram once made his quarters in this chamber. A tattered, canopied bed sits against the north wall, the remains of a writing desk stand against the south wall, a tall brazier stands in the southeast corner, and a moldy carpet rests on the floor just inside the door. Beneath the bed is an empty iron box that once housed some of Abram's treasure (long since removed by the orcs). Inside the brazier are some burned scraps of paper. Any wizard who examines these scraps realizes that they comprise the scorched remains of a spellbook. Although most of the remains are worthless, one particularly large scrap contains a legible version of the *read magic* spell. This scrap proves particularly useful to a wizard PC who also locates the *charm person* scroll in area **3**.

Frieze: This frieze depicts a torrent of flame and rubble shooting skyward from the temple. The caption reads: *"Once the holy*

Mohab the Death Knight

Mohab is a tall, gaunt figure dressed in black armor and armed with a *two-handed sword* +3. Other than a pair of glowing red eyes, his features are entirely hidden behind his black war helm.

The first time the PCs are in his presence, they feel a cold aura of power exuding from him. It is extremely unlikely that the PCs will square off against Mohab in this adventure. Should they attack him, Mohab uses as little force as possible to subdue the PCs and allows the orcs to deal with them.

Mohab (death knight): AC 0; MV 12; HD 9d10; hp 58; THAC0 11 (base); #AT 3/2; Dmg by weapon type; Str 18/00 (+3/+6), Dex 13, Con 14, Int 13, Wis 16, Cha 18; SA spell-like abilities; SD cannot be turned, controls undead as a 6th-level priest, spell reflection; MR 75%; SZ M; ML 17; AL CE; XP 6,000; *MM*/52; black *chainmail* +2, *two-handed sword* +3.

Mohab generates *fear* in a 5' radius and can cast *detect magic*, *detect invisibility*, and *wall of ice* at will. Twice per day, he can cast *dispel magic*. Once per day, the death knight can invoke a *power word* (blind, stun, or kill). He can also cast *symbol of fear* or *symbol of pain* once per day. All of Mohab's spells function at the 20th level of ability.

endeavor is complete, a great cataclysm will bury the temple forever."

36. Blasted Shrine. This room once housed a small shrine and meditation chamber. Since the temple priests stored Aris's eggs here, it was particularly hard hit when Selene was "born." Much of the room's floor is missing, and a broken pit that drops 20 feet into the earth occupies the center of the chamber. The orcs throw particularly troublesome prisoners down into the hole for a couple of days to cool off. A prisoner in the pit sees light only once per day, when the orcs come to deliver scant rations of food and water. Climbing out of the pit without the aid of a rope is impossible for non-thieves.

Each day a prisoner remains in the pit, he or she must make a successful saving throw vs. paralyzation or suffer 1 point of damage. This damage does not heal until the character has spent one full night of rest outside of the ruined temple and Skarg's clutches (or until the PC drinks the *blessed* water in area **8**).

Frieze: The frieze in the blasted shrine depicts two huge, jeweled eggs. The caption reads: *"The eggs are our future and our charge. We will protect and nurture them without fail."*

37. Library. These two rooms in the southwest wing once housed a large collection of books and scrolls. The westernmost room has already been picked clean by Skarg's orcs. The eastern room of the library, though, is buried under so much debris that its secrets have yet to be thoroughly explored. Since many books and scrolls fetch a fair price on the open market, Skarg has assigned a party of prisoners to dig through all the debris to find anything of worth that remains.

The only complete book that remains intact beneath the rubble is a copy of the same text on languages that can be found in area **25**. Any PC assigned to the library work party (as described in "Unfolding the Adventure") has a 10% chance per day of discovering this book. The PC can then either turn the book over to the orcs or attempt to conceal it. Any unescorted PC who spends a full turn searching has a 5% chance of discovering the book.

In addition to the complete book, several leafs torn from another text are strewn about the room. PCs assigned to the library work party have a 20% chance per day of discovering such a leaf. (Unescorted PCs who spend a turn searching have a 10% chance.) Each leaf depicts a complete copy of one of the friezes found throughout the complex (including the caption). Roll 2d20 and consult the appropriate room number for the exact frieze depicted. If the result is a room that does not contain a frieze, the leaf is instead badly damaged and therefore completely unintelligible.

Frieze: The library friezes are identical to the friezes in area **24**. The caption reads: *"A great hall of honor was constructed in south wing of the complex. A great weapon was placed in Cameron's hands."*

38. Aviary. The aviary was once home to an array of exotic birds in the care of the temple priests. Although the birds are long gone, a number of delicate steel cages can be found here resting on stands or suspended from the ceiling. All the cages are empty.

If good-aligned PCs enter this room after work hours and unaccompanied by orcs, they immediately feel a strange bristling at the back of their necks. Shortly thereafter, one of the temple phantoms appears out of nowhere in the doorway behind them. Unlike most of the other phantoms prowling the ruins, this particular apparition is well-formed and recognizable. It seems to be the spirit of some sort of sage or philosopher and, in fact, represents Abram the wizard (although there is no way the PCs can confirm this).

Like the other phantoms, Abram's spectral image is incapable of speech and cannot be harmed or affected by the PCs in any way. Once it has their attention, the phantom motions for the PCs to follow him. He then starts drifting down the complex halls toward area **27a** at a movement rate of 6, stopping for nothing. Once he reaches the threshold of the room, he points inside and then disappears. Should the phantom encounter any orcs along the way, the orcs must make a saving throw vs. spell or run in fear (as described in the phantom entry of the *Monstrous Manual*). If the PCs should become separated from the phantom along the way, they can rejoin him by returning to the aviary, essentially beginning the encounter all over again. Once Abram's phantom has provided the PCs with its clue, it does not appear again.

Obviously, the phantom is trying to help the PCs discover Josephus's puzzle box in the interests of helping them escape. If the PCs have already discovered the puzzle box by the time they enter the aviary, Abram's phantom does not appear.

Frieze: The frieze decorating the aviary depicts the construction of the fungus garden. The caption reads: *"Abram builds a mushroom garden in the southwest wing."*

39. Council Chamber. Over the decades the temple was in use, the temple's elders used this room as a meeting place. Most of the sect's strategies were plotted right here. Still dominating the room is the large council table that was hewn from the living rock.

Surrounding the table are the worthless remains of twelve ornate chairs, and built into the tabletop is a curious dusty stone about 1 foot long and 6 inches wide. If the dust is brushed off the stone, it seems to emit a faint phosphorescent glow. Known to the priests of the temple as the Answer Stone, this curiosity is actually a rudimentary oracle that allowed the priests to commune with Aris. Although the art of using the Stone was forgotten long ago, it's possible that a PC with a high Wisdom score might use it to gain insights into the problem at hand—escaping from the temple. Any good-aligned PC who touches the Answer Stone should immediately attempt a Wisdom check. If the check succeeds, the PC receives a brief but powerful vision. Roll 1d4 as consult the following chart:

Roll	Vision Received
1	The PC receives a vision of the fire place in the owlbear's lair (area **15**). The vision is accompanied by the sound of the owlbear's horrible groaning, providing a clue as to where this fireplace might be found. Anyone who has traveled in the vicinity of area **13** recognizes the sound.
2	The PC receives a vision of the statue of Cameron found in area **43**.
3	The PC receives a vision of the main hearth in area **12**.
4	The PC receives a vision of the brazier in area **35**.

Each PC can only make one attempt to receive a vision.

Frieze: This frieze depicts the construction of the main temple (area **19**). The caption reads: *"The master temple is constructed in the northwest wing."*

40. Discussion Chamber. This room was designed to house any side discussions that arose as a result of the meetings taking place in the council chamber (area **39**). Two tables (now rickety) and a series of stout chairs still stand. Imaginative PCs can form makeshift weapons or digging tools by breaking off the legs of the chairs (Dmg 1–3).

Frieze: The frieze that wraps around the chamber depicts a huge pile of leaves that have fallen from an old tree. The caption reads: *"Aris grows old and weary."*

41. Study. Visitors to the temple complex once used this room as a study and meditation chamber. Now all that remains here are some broken bits of furniture and some collapsed bookshelves hanging off the north wall. When the shelves collapsed, they spilled their contents on to the floor—a crystal swan (now shattered), an empty candle holder, several blank sheets of moldy vellum, some charcoal pencils, and a book.

The book is a treatise on various types of mushrooms and fungi written in the Common

tongue. Anyone who spends 4 hours studying the book learns the properties of the mysterious mushrooms found in area **42**, including the procedure for poisoning a liquid with the mushroom's paste.

Frieze: The frieze depicts the initiation of four paladins who once served as temple protectors: *"Knights of pure heart are hand-picked to guard the temple and its purpose."*

42. Fungus Garden. Just after the complex was built, Abram the wizard established a garden for cultivating fungi here. His crops were used to feed the temple inhabitants and to provide the raw materials for some of his more arcane experiments.

Although the fungus garden was once one of the most breathtaking sights in the whole complex, it's now almost entirely overgrown by a peculiar variety of wild mushroom—a black toadstool with a white spot on its cap. The black mushrooms are mildly poisonous. Anyone who eats one must make a successful saving throw vs. poison or fall unconscious for 1d10 hours. Crushing some of the mushrooms into a paste and adding the paste to a liquid effectively produces a poisonous potion. Treat those who drink the concoction as though they have eaten a mushroom. The fungus garden contains a practically unlimited supply of the toadstools.

Frieze: The friezes in the fungus garden depicts a number of tall trees in a dense forest. There is no caption.

43. Honor Hall. The final step in the construction of the temple complex was the dedication of this hall to various fallen heroes and priests who once led the sect that constructed the temple. In addition to several large piles of rubble and debris, four damaged 9'-tall statues dominate the room. A long, thin pool of smelly, stagnant water runs the length of the hall, just east of the statues.

The name of the figure each statue represents is engraved in the Common tongue on the statue's base. The statues depict:

- Josia, a priestess dressed in flowing robes with a dove perched upon her fingertips.
- Cameron, a paladin dressed in chainmail and wielding a longsword. Although it's difficult to notice due to all the dust that has collected on the statue, the sword in Cameron's hand is not part of the sculpture but a *longsword +1* cleverly inserted into the statue's hand. It can be removed from the statue without too much difficulty.
- Thomas, a sage dressed in long robes and holding a large stone sphere in his hands.
- Dionna, a huntress dressing in a tunic and wielding a bow. (Dionna's weapon is part of the statue).

Frieze: The frieze depicts the construction of the temple's scripture room. The caption reads: *"A scripture repository was established in the northeast wing of the complex."*

44. Accessways. These are all passageways leading off to other portions of the complex that are blocked with rubble. Their purpose is to allow DMs to reuse the hidden temple in later adventures. Long after the PCs escape, they might decide to find out whether or not any other secrets lie hidden in the temple ruins. They can then return and excavate some or all of these passageways to explore new wings of the temple.

45. Vault. The vault lies just off the southeast accessway. Originally, it was used to house rare religious texts, but after Mohab recovered the eggs from the Legion all those years ago, the texts were moved out of the complex and the vault was used to store the cursed egg. Of course, Mohab ultimately replaced the cursed egg with its uncursed twin and believes the second egg is still in this location today.

When Mohab and Skarg finally reach the vault, they discover to their surprise that the egg is no longer present. Actually, another mysterious former inhabitant of the temple survived across the centuries and used magic to recover the egg long ago. It is now in the hands of a sect of Aris's priests who have built a temple complex identical to this one elsewhere on the planet. These priests are aware of the mind flayer/Legion conspiracy and are trying to hatch the egg in the hope that the new goddess will strengthen Aris's position and help defeat Selene. Exactly who this mysterious second survivor of the cataclysm might be, how he recovered the egg, and whether or not Aris's defenders will successfully hatch the second goddess are all questions left for future adventures to answer.

Should Mohab and Skarg discover that the egg is not present, the former bellows a loud curse and the latter begins complaining loudly. Mohab wonders aloud how anyone else could have known the location of the egg (confirming for any PCs who overhear that an egg was, in fact, the target of the expedition). Skarg points out that he and his troops endured many hardships all for nothing and demands some sort of satisfaction from Mohab. In a fit of anger, Mohab throws a small *fireball*, killing Skarg and a few of his troopers. He then walks out of the complex and disappears.

Once Skarg is dead, a brief power struggle takes place between Storr (area **25**) and Og, another headstrong and domineering orc. All the remaining orcs immediately declare allegiance to one faction or the other. The resulting confusion presents an ideal distraction that might aid the PCs' escape. The orc who wins the struggle orders all of the orcs out of the temple, abandoning the prisoners with nc food, water, or weapons. If the PCs are still within the complex at this point, the DM might prepare an adventure that challenges them to lead the other prisoners back to civilization without provisions.

Unfolding the Adventure

As mentioned in the introduction, throughout most of this adventure the PCs will be unarmed prisoners. As play opens, each PC has only a loose robe. All of the equipment belonging to the PCs begins play in area **17**.

The Daily Routine

Activity within the temple complex follows a rough daily pattern. Play begins on Day 1 at 7 A.M., just before the work shift begins. The following events happen each day until either Skarg reaches the vault (area **45**) or the PCs escape. The DM should discuss this schedule with the players; as play begins, their characters will be quite familiar with it.

6:30 A.M.: Orcs wake up. Soon thereafter, orcs from area **25** pound on the door of area **26a** to awake the prisoners.

7:00 A.M.: Work shift begins. Nine orcs lead the prisoners from area **26a** to their work areas. Two work parties are dispatched each morning, one to dig out the rubble around vault (work begins around area **30**) and the other to search the debris in the library (area **37**). Three-fourths of the prisoners always work the rubble, while the other quarter work the library. Roll a 1d4 for each PC every morning. A result of 1 indicates that the PC is assigned to the library party; otherwise the PC is assigned to the rubble party. While working, each of the prisoners is issued one digging tool that can inflict 1–4 points of damage when used as a weapon. These tools are collected at the end of the shift.

10:00 A.M.: Water break. A prisoner from each work party selected by the orcs at random is dispatched to area **18** to fetch water for the other prisoners. There is a 50% chance that these water bearers are accompanied by a single orc escort and a 50% chance they are allowed to head for area **18** unescorted. In any case, if the water bearers don't return in a reasonable amount of time, six orcs go looking for them.

1:00 P.M.: Water break (same as 10 A.M.).

4:00 P.M.: Water break (same as 10 A.M.).

7:00 P.M.: Five orcs begin preparing food in areas **10** and **12**. The prisoners typically receive broth or gruel and the occasional piece of tough meat. The orcs feast upon a roast pig or deer, cooked in the hearth of area **12**.

8:00 P.M.: Nine orcs collect the prisoners and escort them back to area **26a**.

8:30 P.M.: Three orcs step inside area **26a** and present the prisoners with their food.

Daily Event Table

Use this table if the PCs follow the orcs' timeline and participate in the daily work duties. Roll 1d8 on the table below a couple times during each work shift.

1. Loose rubble/debris. Pick a PC at random. While the PC is digging, he or she hits some loose rubble or debris and causes a minor cave in. The PC must make a successful saving throw vs. breath weapon to avoid sustaining 1–2 points of damage. The orcs quickly excavate the PC and put him or her back to work.

2. Fetch. Roll 1d4. On a roll of 1–2, one of the PCs is selected as the water bearer for his or her work group this day. On a 3–4, one of the PCs is ordered to fetch some replacement tools from area **10** about halfway through the work shift. In this latter case, the PC will travel unescorted, but the orcs sound the general alarm if the PC does not return in a reasonable amount of time.

3. Prisoner disturbance. One of the prisoners stumbles, grows sick, or otherwise refuses to work. The orcs whip the prisoner (and anyone who interferes) with scourges until the prisoner resumes working or dies.

4. Overhear conversation. One of the PCs (chosen randomly) overhears two orcs talking in Orcish. If the PC can understand the orcs, she overhears one of the following statements:

- "Once we get that damned egg, vengeance will be ours! We'll make the Bloodthirsters sorry they exiled us!"
- "I don't know that I trust Mohab. I think he knows a lot more about this prize we seek than he is telling us."
- "Once we find the prize, Skarg will be the most powerful orc in the land!"
- "Sometimes I feel as though we are prisoners ourselves—prisoners of Mohab!"

5. Message. One of the PCs is ordered to take a message to an orc elsewhere within the complex. The message is always something mundane and uninteresting ("We need more tools down at the library.") The PC travel unescorted, but the orcs sound the general alarm if he or she doesn't return in a reasonable amount of time.

6. Phantom encounter. One of the PCs gets a good look at a temple phantom. See "The Hidden Temple" for information on how the phantom behaves.

9:00 P.M.: The orcs begin a loud revelry. Most of the orcs in the complex stop by areas **12** and **18** to get food. Wine from area **11** is distributed throughout the complex. There is a 1-in-6 chance that any orc encountered between 10 P.M. and 6 A.M. is drunk (–3 penalty to all attack rolls, saving throws, and ability checks) and another 1-in-6 chance that the orc is sound asleep.

10:00 P.M.: An orc from area **25** enters area **26a** for an inspection. After this point, prisoners are expected to stay quiet. If any prisoners are found to be missing, the orc sounds the general alarm.

1:00 A.M.: An orc from area **25** is supposed to enter area **26a** to make sure the prisoners are all under control. There is a 2-in-6 chance that the orc is drunkenly sleeping and fails to show up. If the inspection happens and any prisoners are found to be missing, the orc sounds the general alarm.

4:00 A.M.: Inspection. Same as 1 A.M., but the chance the orc is sleeping is 3-in-6.

Prisoners who are obviously incapacitated (or those who manage to convince the orcs that they are incapacitated) are not usually required to work for the day. These prisoners remain in area **26a**. Any prisoner who misses two days of work in a row is required to begin working on the third day regardless of his or her condition. By this point, the orcs have essentially given up these invalids as lost and decided to get as much work as possible out of the prisoners before they die.

At 8:00 P.M. each evening, every PC who worked during the day must attempt a Constitution check. If the check fails, the character suffers 1 point of damage from fatigue. There is no need to make these checks for the NPC prisoners. Assume that one NPC prisoner dies every 2 days from fatigue.

Timeline

Here is a quick day-to-day timeline explaining how the adventure unfolds. Note that it is possible that the actions of the PCs might alter this timeline. This version of events presumes that the PCs do nothing.

Day 1: Adventure begins.

Day 3: Mohab arrives at the complex in the morning. He spends the morning speaking with Skarg and the rest of the day meditating in his former quarters (area **32a**).

The work party breaks through to the northwest wing of the vestibule.

Day 4: Mohab leaves the complex.

Day 5: Mohab returns to the complex in the morning. He spends the morning speaking with Skarg and the rest of the day meditating in his former quarters (area **32a**).

The work party breaks through to the center section of the vestibule (area **30**).

Day 6: Mohab leaves the complex.

Day 10: Mohab returns to the complex and meditates in his quarters all day and night.

Day 11: The work party finally breaks through into the vault and finds the egg missing. An incensed Mohab kills Skarg and leaves. A power struggle erupts among the orc survivors. By the end of the day, the new orc chief leads the remaining orcs out of the complex. The orcs take all food and weapons and abandon any remaining prisoners.

Moving About

At various points in the adventure, the PCs will have the opportunity to move about the complex at will, sometimes with the orcs' permission. If the PCs are attempting to move about surreptitiously, any orcs within 60 feet have an opportunity to spot them. To resolve an attempt to spot moving PCs, make one Wisdom ability check for all orcs, adding a +1 bonus for each orc past the first and each visible PC past the first. (Assume the orcs all have a Wisdom score of 8).

A thief traveling alone can avoid detection by making a successful Hide in Shadows roll. The *dust of disappearance* found in area **27a** allows any PC to automatically slip past orcs undetected.

An orc always spots a PC who is moving through an illuminated area less than 15 feet away. Only thieves who make a successful Hide in Shadows and Move Silently roll can approach without being detected.

Should one or more orcs spot a PC who is moving through the complex without permission, they order the PC to surrender, using the necessary force to make the PC comply. If possible, Skarg's orcs always attempt to subdue rather than kill escaping prisoners.

Hiding Items

The PCs might acquire items that they wish to hide from the orcs. Several times per day an orc enters the prisoner's holding area for inspection. (See "The Daily Routine" above.) This orc automatically finds any items in the possession of the PCs that were not hidden. To spot a hidden item, the orc must make a successful Wisdom check. The DM can impose penalties to this check if he or she believes the PCs chose an especially clever location for a hiding spot. A thief who hides an item and passes a Hide in Shadows roll automatically hides that item in such a way that the orcs have no chance of finding it.

Use a similar system whenever a PC wants to hide an item on his or her person. Make a single collective Wisdom check for all the orcs during any work shift in which a PC attempts to hide an object on his or her person.

Should the orcs discover a hidden item, they confiscate it. If they can identify the item's owner, he or she is either flogged or fed to the Gnasher. Ω